

Independent Guide

What is an environmental management system ISO 14001?



Independent workplace compliance

Introduction

ISO 14001 is an international standard for environmental management. The purpose of the standard is to provide a framework for organisations to implement and improve their management system to increase environmental performance. This standard follows a similar format to other standards, such as ISO 45001, so can be combined with existing certified management systems.

Why is ISO 14001 important?

Obtaining certification to the ISO 14001 standard brings a number of benefits to an organisation. Not only will it demonstrate sound business management and commitment to reducing your environmental impacts, but also financial benefits can be made from a reduction in resource use and environmental improvements. Research shows that companies who manage not only the standard economic factors, but also the environmental and social factors which affect the business, do show financial performance superior to those which fail to manage all three. Additionally, some organisations that have achieved ISO 14001 status have reported that the process inspired creativity in staff. It will also assist with compliance and help prevent any potential prosecutions.

Furthermore, externally accredited ISO 14001 certification can provide a major constituent of an organisation's Corporate Social Responsibility requirements, when an internally produced environmental report is not seen as sufficient in terms of accountability.

What are the requirements of ISO 14001?

ISO 14001 is not a legal requirement, but it is the most recognised standard to demonstrate an organisation's commitment to environmental management and is considered one of the most effective ways to manage your environmental impacts. More and more people expect this certification in order to work for, or with, organisations.

How can my organisation become ISO 14001 certified?

Firstly, the organisation has to put in place a formal environmental management system. Such a system will include a policy, planning, implementation and operation of the system, checking and a process of management review. The standard has clauses which the organisation needs to address and be able to demonstrate within their environmental management system along with demonstrating suitable leadership and continual improvement.

Once the clauses have been successfully addressed and implemented into the environmental management system, then the organisation can go through the process of getting certified by an external accredited auditing body, which can recommend and award certification.

What else do I need to know?

One of the important features of the environmental management system is the need to demonstrate continual improvement. Once the system has been developed it is necessary for the organisation to continually improve upon environmental performance. This is accomplished through achieving environmental objectives and targets against your significant impacts, and improving the environmental management system or any of its components.

This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting. Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 30 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.



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