



BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ISO 14001 : 2015

Environmental Management System Requirements Explained



What is ISO 14001 : 2015?

The globally renowned ISO 14001 Standard sets out and normalises the methods for handling environmental concerns such as the prevention of pollution and preservation of the natural world. It helps organisations to develop and implement their own environmental policies and objectives, stressing the importance of continual improvement and meeting legal obligations.

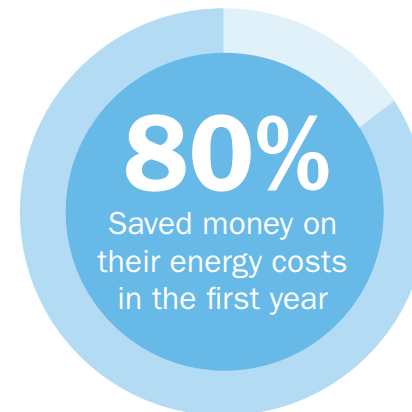
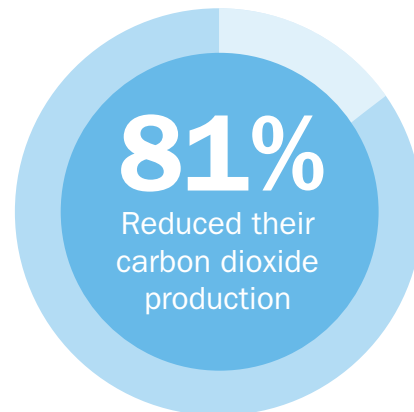
The framework of ISO 14001:2015 provides assurance to employees, customers and other external stakeholders that the environmental impact of the organisation is being measured and improved.

Why use it?

Environmental issues are receiving more attention in recent years with businesses being fined on a regular basis for pollution and unauthorised disposal/treatment of waste. As the effects of global warming are becoming more severe, governments are introducing new legislation to try and reduce the impact further. Because of this, mistakes when it comes to environmental issues can be incredibly costly – both in terms of finances and your brand's reputation.

By following the guidelines of ISO 14001 you will be able prove that your business meets legal obligations for environmental issues and assure your customers that you are a green brand.

In a survey performed in 2011, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs performed a case study involving 31 small and medium sized enterprises. For those using ISO 14001, they found:



Source: randd.defra.gov.uk



How does it work?

ISO 14001 : 2015 is built around 7 key areas...



1

Context

What?

You need to outline and communicate your organisation's responsibilities.

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Why?

In an age where protecting the environment is becoming more important, those who damage it find their reputations damaged too. Proving that your business is committed to protecting the environment not only helps to cover you against this negative scrutiny but can increase positive brand recognition.

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How?

Start by defining a set of environmental policies that are appropriate to the nature, scale and impact of your organisation's activities, products and services. A specific list of goals allows you to determine how you will handle them as well as setting the expectations of any interested parties. Think about how you will measure the success – or failure – of these objectives.

To help with this, identify anyone who would be interested in your organisation's environmental impact: government bodies, customers, partners etc. Knowing who is impacted and how will identify potential areas to focus on.

You will need to document and communicate this information throughout your organisation.



2

Leadership

What?

Leaders at all levels should establish a unity of purpose and direction.

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Why?

When the leadership of an organisation sets an example by actively participating in and encouraging those under them to care about the Environmental Management System, they are creating an atmosphere that should motivate everyone to work towards achieving the organisation's environmental objectives.

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How?

As a business leader, you should take accountability for your organisation's environmental goals – build them into your organisation's business objectives, and then document and communicate them. If everyone knows what your environmental objectives are and how they are to be fulfilled, then they can act with one purpose – especially if your organisation's leadership is setting a positive example in this regard. It is important to empower your people by giving them the resources, training and authority to act with accountability.



3

Planning

What?

You need to establish, implement and maintain the processes needed to meet your goals.

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Why?

By planning your processes in advance your business will be able to react quickly to any environmental risks and opportunities that may arise. It also shows that you are forward-thinking and proactive business, not a reactive one.

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How?

You've already defined your goals, now you should plan how you will achieve them. For each goal, determine: what will be done; what resources will be required; who is responsible; how long it will take and how the results should be evaluated.

Determine any risks and opportunities related to your business' environmental aspects and note any obligations in this regard such as government regulations.

You should also consider potential changes to your business that may affect your environmental goals such as new products or services and abnormal conditions/emergency situations.



4

Support

What?

Determine and provide the resources needed to fulfil your goals.

Why?

Without support, it is unlikely that your environmental goals will be achieved. A fully supported environmental management system shows that your organisation is committed to reducing environmental impact, not just paying lip-service.

How?

Supporting an environmental management system covers many areas from providing the resources needed to achieve an environmental goal, to training staff in how to handle environmental issues.

A large part of supporting the system is to document and communicate it – both internally and externally. Documents should be reviewed and updated regularly, and any changes communicated appropriately.



5

Operation

What?

The management system should be part of your day-to-day operations

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Why?

Environmental issues should be thought of as part of business operations – not just an afterthought once the issue has already occurred. You are showing that you are a proactive business.

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How?

Consider how your environmental goals can be met at every stage of your business life cycle, this could be the end-of-life treatment or disposal of your products/services. You should use your findings to design a series of controls that will help you to address them.

In addition, you will need to establish, implement and maintain a plan to address emergency situations.

Details should be documented and communicated to relevant parties. For example, your customers may wish to know how to responsibly dispose of your products.



6

Performance evaluation

What?

You should monitor, measure, analyse and evaluate performance.

Why?

By evaluating your performance, you are ensuring that your goals and legal obligations continue to be met. This step also allows you to identify and rectify issues early on, before they become a problem.

How?

Firstly, determine what needs to be measured. You should set out a series of guidelines to allow consistent measurement – especially where measurements can be subjective.

Data shouldn't just be collected but be analysed, not only to see if a goal has been reached, but if improvements can be made.

You should perform regular audits and management reviews to ensure that your targets and measurements are still fit for purpose.

Everything within this section needs to be documented.



7

Improvement

What?

Successful organisations focus on continual improvement.

Why?

A business that never improves will eventually stagnate, even in the unlikely event that performance remains constant. From small, incremental alterations to large breakthrough changes, all improvements can increase the success of your environmental policies.

How?

When looking at any type of improvement, consider the root cause as well as addressing the consequences. This will allow you to introduce preventive actions and even allow you to spot and prevent further issues that may occur in the future. Regularly tracking and reviewing processes and making improvements will ensure they are always fit for purpose.

Who can help?

Implementing an ISO 14001 Environmental Management System is not something you have to do alone, and certification doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. If you are interested in the benefits that the ISO 14001 standard can bring to your business, and are looking for a common sense and an efficient approach which doesn't break the bank, QMS International can support you every step of the way.

Having helped implement thousands of Management Systems across the UK, for businesses in a wide range of industries, QMS's market-leading services include everything from drafting a compliant Manual, to offering on-site Training and Certification.

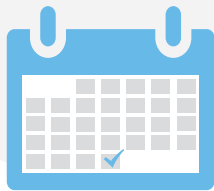
Figures shown below are taken from the QMS ISO 9001 customer survey 2016.

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