

## The Future for Environmental Management Systems



In September 2015, the new ISO 14001 Environmental Management System standard was introduced to the world. Businesses with the old standard, ISO 14001:2004 have 3 years to transition to the new 2015 standard or lose their certification.

So, what are the differences and what do they mean to your business?

There are several differences in the new standard, here are the main ones:

**Strategic environmental management** – ISO 14001:2015 placed increased importance on environmental standards with the ever-changing regulatory environment and circumstances that affect companies

**Leadership** – New language has been added that specifically designates environmental responsibility to be part of the duties of leadership in an organisation.

**Protecting the environment** – The expectation on organisations has been expanded to commit to proactive initiatives to protect the environment from harm and degradation, consistent with the context of the organisation. The revised text does not define 'protect the environment' but it notes that it can include prevention of pollution, sustainable resource use, climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, etc.

**Environmental performance** – There is a shift in emphasis with regard to continual improvement, from improving the management system to improving environmental performance. Consistent with the organisation's policy commitments the organisation would, as applicable, reduce emissions, effluents and waste to levels set by itself.

**Lifecycle thinking** – In addition to the current requirement to manage environmental aspects associated with procured goods and services, organisations will need to extend their control and influence on the environmental impacts associated with product use and end-of-life treatment or disposal. Note, this does not imply a requirement to do a life cycle assessment.

**Communication** – The development of a communications strategy with equal emphasis on external and internal communications has been added. This includes a requirement to communicating consistent and reliable information, and establishing mechanisms for persons working under the organisation's control to make suggestions on improving the environmental management system. The decision to communicate externally is retained by the organisation but the decision needs to take into account information reporting required by regulatory agencies and the expectations of other interested parties.

**Documentation** – Reflecting the evolution of computer and cloud based systems for running management systems, the revision incorporates the term 'documented information', instead of 'documents' and 'records'. To align with ISO 9001, the organisation will retain the flexibility to determine when 'procedures' are needed to ensure effective process control.

The new standard has a similar structure to the new ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System and other Management Systems that will allow it to be integrated much more easily.

Finally, what are the benefits of using ISO 14001:2015?

During a survey of almost 5000 organisations using ISO 14001 the following was identified:

- **75%** high or above for meeting legal requirements and improving the organisation's environmental performance
- **60%** high or above for management commitment and employee engagement
- **50%** high or above for business management, notably for meeting stakeholder requirements, improving public image, achieving strategic objectives, and integrating with business management systems
- **60%** moderate value or higher in the area supplier environmental performance
- **75%** moderate or above for providing a competitive advantage
- **60%** moderate value or above for providing financial benefit

The clock is ticking for those organisations with the 2004 standard to transition to the new standard, for more information on implementing ISO 14001:2015 or transitioning from the 2004 standard to the new standard, contact Yvonne, +971 (0)55 589 7152 or email [yvonne@csa-consultants.me](mailto:yvonne@csa-consultants.me)