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# Introducing the new ISO 14001:2015 environmental management standard

## Standardising the standards

ISO (the International Standards Organisation) is implementing a common approach to management system standards. This approach includes a common high-level clause structure, and common terminology. It has already been applied to ISO 27001 (information security standard), and more recently to the new ISO 9001 (Quality management) and 14001 (environmental management) standards. It can be expected to be applied to all management system certification standards – which will include the forthcoming ISO 45001 occupational health and safety management standard. So, for the first time, the management systems standards themselves are becoming standardised.

Individual standards may add additional “discipline-specific” requirements as required. ISO believes that this common approach will increase the value of such standards to users. It will be particularly useful for those organisations that wish to implement an IMS (integrated management system) to address the requirements of two or more standards.

The following table illustrates the difference between the high-level clause structure of ISO 14001:2004 and ISO 14001:2015.

ISO 14001:2004	ISO 14001:2015
0. Introduction	0. Introduction
1. Scope	1. Scope
2. Normative References	2. Normative References
3. Terms and Definitions	3. Terms and Definitions
4.1 General Requirements	4. Context of the Organization
4.2 Environmental Policy	5. Leadership
4.3 Planning	6. Planning
4.4 Implementation and Operation	7. Support
4.5 Checking	8. Operations
4.6 Management Review	9. Performance Evaluation
	10. Improvement

The following table illustrates the clause structure of ISO 14001:2015 in more detail and in the context of the PDCA cycle – starting at clause 4 (the first clause specifying a requirement).

PLAN				DO	CHECK	ACT
<b>4. Context of the organization</b>	<b>5. Leadership</b>	<b>6. Planning</b>	<b>7. Support</b>	<b>8. Operation</b>	<b>9. Performance evaluation</b>	<b>10. Improvement</b>
4.1 Understanding the organization and its context	5.1 Leadership and commitment	6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities	7.1 Resources	8.1 Operational planning and control	9.1 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation	10.1 General
4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties	5.2 Environmental policy	6.2 Environmental objectives and planning to achieve them	7.2 Competence	8.2 Emergency preparedness and response	9.2 Internal audit	10.2 Nonconformity and corrective action
4.3 Determining the scope of the EMS	5.3 Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities		7.3 Awareness		9.3 Management review	10.3 Continual improvement
4.4 Environmental management system			7.4 Communication			
			7.5 Documented information			

The following is a brief commentary on those clauses:

## Context of the organization

### 4.1 Understanding the organization and its context.

This is a new requirement: one of several that might suggest a greater union between the EMS or IMS and wider business planning activities. Requires organizations to ascertain, monitor and review both internal and external issues that are relevant to its purpose and strategic direction, and have the ability to impact the management system and its intended results.

### 4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties.

Requires the organization to determine which interested parties are relevant to the EMS, what are their relevant needs and expectations, and which of those become compliance (i.e. legal or regulatory) obligations.

### 4.3 Determining the scope of the EMS.

Determine the boundaries and applicability of the EMS e.g. the geographical and organizational boundaries to which the EMS system will apply. This scope must include any activities, products and services that can have significant environmental aspects. A scope statement must be documented and made available to interested parties.

### 4.4 Environmental management system.

States requirement for the organization to establish, implement, maintain and continue to improve an EMS.

This largely replaces the requirement expressed in clause 4.1 of the previous standard, but adds a requirement for the organization to consider knowledge of its context when establishing and maintaining the EMS. However, it doesn't mention that context needs to be considered when improving the EMS – but perhaps that should be assumed.

## **5 Leadership**

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### **5.1 Leadership and commitment.**

Greater emphasis is placed on the role of top management. Requires top management to demonstrate leadership and commitment, and be accountable for the effectiveness of the EMS. This suggests that a more hands-on approach is expected.

### **5.2 Environmental policy.**

This replaces a broadly similar requirement in clause 4.2 of the 2004 standard. A requirement is introduced that the policy is appropriate to the context of the organization.

### **5.3 Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities.**

The requirement for a specific management representative is no longer specified.

## **6 Planning**

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### **6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities.**

This incorporates the planning requirements from clause 4.3 of the 2004 standard e.g. aspects, impacts, legal and regulatory requirements. Greater emphasis is placed on taking a risk-based approach, considering the context of the organization and the requirements of relevant interested parties.

### **6.2 Environmental objectives and planning to achieve them.**

This is broadly similar to the requirements of clause 4.3.3 Objectives, targets and programme(s) in the 2004 standard. Additional details are added for progress towards achieving objectives to be monitored and indicated.

## **7 Support**

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### **7.1 Resources.**

### **7.2 Competence.**

### **7.3 Awareness.**

These are all broadly similar to the matching requirements in the earlier standard.

### **7.4 Communication.**

This clause is considerably reworded and expanded from the equivalent clause 4.4.3 in the 2004 standard. It adds requirements for the organization to respond to relevant communications on its EMS, and to retain documented evidence of its communications. Interestingly, there is also a new requirement to ensure that the information communicated is consistent with that generated within the EMS, and is reliable. So, there should only be one version of the truth – and if an environmental communication proves to be ‘unreliable’ that would presumably constitute a nonconformity.

### **7.5 Documented information.**

In a controversial change that will no doubt confuse many, “Documents”, “Documentation” and “Records” are combined to become “Documented information”.

Requirements are expanded to mention issues such as confidentiality, access, and (data) integrity. This suggests an adoption of information security considerations in recognition of the increasing use of electronic documents/data.



## **Operations**

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### **8.1 Operational planning and control.**

This clause is considerably reworded and expanded from the equivalent clause 4.4.6 in the 2004 standard. It adds requirements for the organization to control or influence outsourced work, and for the type and degree of control applied to be defined within the EMS.

Reference is made to taking a life-cycle perspective when determining, establishing and communicating environmental requirements to external providers.

### **8.2 Emergency preparedness and response.**

This is broadly similar to the requirements of clause 4.4.7 in the 2004 standard, but adds the requirement for the organization to take action to prevent the occurrence of environmental emergency situations and accidents. A similar (but not quite so specific) requirement was included in the preventive action clause of the 2004 standard.



## **Performance evaluation**

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### **9.1 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation.**

There is a new requirement for the organization to evaluate its environmental performance and provide input to the management review.

There is a requirement to communicate information relevant to environmental performance both internally and externally, but only as determined by the organization's communication process and as required by its compliance obligations. So, that may not be a great deal for many organizations.

### **9.2 Internal audit.**

This expands on the requirements of clause 4.5.5 in the 2004 standard with is a new requirement that the audit programme or schedule must take into account the risk associated with threats and opportunities.

### **9.3 Management review.**

Expanded requirements for management review inputs – to consider changes in significant environmental aspects and risk associated with threats and opportunities, and the adequacy of resources required for maintaining an effective EMS. Requirements for outputs are expanded – specifically mentioning any resource needs and implications for the strategic direction of the organization.



## **Improvement**

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### **10.1 Nonconformity and corrective action.**

Specific reference to preventive action is removed.

The clause now includes an additional requirement to record the nature of nonconformities.

On discovering a nonconformity, an explicit requirement is introduced for the organization to determine whether other similar nonconformities actually exist, or could potentially happen within the scope of the EMS.

### **10.2 Continual improvement.**

There is a new requirement to continually improve the EMS to enhance environmental performance.

## **Wrap up**

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The above is intended as a brief introduction to the new clause structure, and our initial thoughts on their requirements. We have highlighted what we consider to be the most significant changes. Others may well have a different view on them.

## **Keeping informed**

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### **Newsletters**

Qudos provide updates on changes to various standards via our regular newsletters. You may sign up for our newsletter by clicking on the link at our web site: [www.qudos-software.com](http://www.qudos-software.com).

### **Enviro Manager Toolkit**

This comprehensive toolkit has been recently updated to reflect the requirements of ISO 14001:2015. It

includes new articles, guidance material, planning tools, sample policies, documents, and other resources. Enviro Manager toolkit is available in Qudos Club and Qudos 3 software – see below.

### **Qudos Club**

The online resource library for compliance and risk management is constantly being updated with new content for Quality, Health & Safety, and Environmental management. To join, or for existing member login, go to [www.qudosclub.com](http://www.qudosclub.com)

### **Qudos 3 software**

Qudos 3 already supports many requirements of the new standards - with further enhancements also in development. Contact [info@qudos-software.com](mailto:info@qudos-software.com).

If you have any comments or questions, we would be pleased to hear from you.



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