



Summary of ISO 14000

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Summary of ISO 14000

In brief

ISO 14000 refers to a family of voluntary standards developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The standards provide a framework for a strategic approach to an organization's environmental policies, plans and actions. Using the framework, a company develops an environmental management system or EMS. The EMS is evaluated by a "certification body" to determine whether the EMS conforms to ISO 14000. If so, the organization is said to have "ISO 14000 certification."

Background

The ISO has been developing voluntary technical standards over almost all sectors of business, industry and technology since 1947. The vast majority of ISO standards are highly specific to a particular product, material or process. For instance, ISO standards insure that nuts and bolts fit together properly.

ISO 14000 is quite different from most other ISO standards. It is known as a *generic management system standard*. *Generic* means that the same standard can be applied to any organization, large or small, whatever its product or service, in any sector of activity, and whether it is a business enterprise, public administration or government department. *Management system* refers to what the organization does to manage its processes or activities. ISO 14000 is concerned with the way an organization goes about its work, and not directly with the results of this work. The focus is on processes, not products.

ISO 14000 grew out of ISO's commitment to support sustainable development as discussed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Conversations among 20 countries, 11 international organizations, and more than 100 environmental experts actually began in 1991 to define the basic requirements of a new approach to environment-related standards. The first standards—ISO 14004 and ISO 14001—were published in September and October 1996, respectively. The "ISO 14000 family" consists of standards and guidelines relating to environmental management systems and supporting standards on terminology and specific tools, such as auditing. Essentially, the standards are concerned with what an organization does to minimize harmful effects on the environment caused by its activities: either during production or disposal, either by pollution or by depleting natural resources.

What is an ISO 14000 EMS?

An environmental management system (EMS) based on the ISO 14000 standards is a management tool enabling an organization of any size or type to control the impact of its activities, products or services on the environment. It defines a structured approach for 1) setting environmental objectives and targets, 2) achieving these goals, and 3) demonstrating that they have been achieved. Because ISO 14000 does not set levels of environmental performance, the standards can be implemented by a wide variety of organizations, whatever their current level of environmental maturity. *However, a*

commitment to compliance with applicable environmental legislation and regulations is required, along with a commitment to continuous improvement.

What are the steps to certification?

1. Understand ISO 14001's need for controls, procedures and records.
2. Determine environmental impacts and laws relevant to your organization.
3. Identify existing procedures to use in ISO 14001 and new ones needed.
4. Write a Policy, Environment Manual, Management Procedures and Records.
5. Measure and record your environmental performance against objectives.
6. Audit, correct and improve your environmental system and procedures.
7. Undergo independent assessment and registration to ISO 14001.

Who conducts conformity assessments?

ISO does not carry out assessments to check that standards are being implemented by users in conformity with the requirements of any ISO standard. Rather, private sector suppliers or regulatory bodies that have been approved by a national accreditation body will carry out certifications. In Mexico, the "member body" to ISO is Dirección General de Normas:

Dirección General de Normas
Calle Puente de Tecamachalco No. 6
Lomas de Tecamachalco
Sección Fuentes
MX-53 950 Naucalpan de Juárez

Tel: +52 5 729 94 80
Fax: +52 5 729 94 84
Email: iso-mex@economia.gob.mx
Web: <http://www.economia-normas.gob.mx>

How does one get a copy of the standards?

Contact the Dirección General de Normas for a copy of *Environmental Management—The ISO 14000 Family of International Standards* (ISBN 92-67-10367-9). The brochure lists 21 published standards, technical reports, guides, and documents under development that make up the ISO 14000 family, as well as other ISO 14000 publications by ISO.

Benefits of ISO 14000 certification

The ISO 14000 approach forces managers to take a critical look at all areas where their businesses have an environmental impact. This systematic approach can lead to benefits like the following:

- Reduced cost of waste management,
- Savings in consumption of energy and materials,
- Lower distribution costs,
- Improved corporate image among regulators, customers and the public, and a
- Framework for continuous improvement of environmental performance.

Applicability of ISO 14000 to a Clean Marina program

The strategic approach to assessing and addressing environmental impacts laid out by ISO 14000 is applicable to marina operations. Some items to consider before linking a Mexican “clean marina” program with ISO 14000 are listed below.

- Marinas may benefit from international recognition of the ISO 14000 standards.
- Potentially there is an existing infrastructure for assessments. Thus, a new assessment system would not need to be created.
- Under ISO 14000, individual marinas will define their goals and develop their own environmental management systems. There are no set environmental standards for marinas to meet. There is, therefore, a potential for inconsistencies among marinas.
- Compare the level of paperwork/documentation required for ISO 14000 certification to that required by other model clean marina programs.

Information in this summary was drawn from the ISO web: <http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/ISOOnline.openerspage>.