Environmental Aspects Guidance

ISO 14001:2015

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1 Managing Environmental Aspects

1.1 What does ISO 14001 Require?

Your organization must determine the significance of the environmental aspects related to its activities, process, products and services under its control and influence. Your organization will need to establish criteria to determine which of these aspects have or can have a significant environmental impact.

Consideration of environmental aspects in the use of product and services (e.g. energy consumption, lifetime, disposal) plus, where known, the environmental aspects arising from sourcing of raw materials, should be identified. This is because the EMS is required to demonstrate life cycle thinking.

- When determining applicable environmental aspects, ensure your organization takes into account potential change, including planned or new developments, and new or modified activities, products and services;
- When determining applicable environmental aspects, ensure your organization takes into account potential abnormal conditions and reasonably foreseeable emergency situations?
- Ensure your organization has determined those aspects that may/pose a significant environmental impact by using established assessment criteria;
- Ensure your organization has communicated those aspects that may/pose a significant environmental impact throughout the various levels and functions of your organization;
- Ensure your organization maintains documented information regarding its environmental aspects and associated impacts;
- Ensure your organization maintains documented information regarding the criteria used to determine its significant environmental aspects;
- Ensure your organization maintains documented information regarding its significant environmental aspects.

1.1.1 What is an Environmental Aspect?

An **environmental aspect** is an element of an organization's activities, products or services that interacts or can interact with the environment. Significant environmental aspects can result in risks and opportunities with associated adverse or beneficial impacts. Objective evidence must contain established criteria for evaluating significance of aspects (i.e., process or procedure).

Your organization should think about the level of control or influence it has over the environmental aspects at each stage in the life cycle. The level of control or influence will need to be taken into account when determining whether an aspect is significant and, as a consequence, whether the organization has to take action.

Environmental aspects cause, or have the potential to cause, an environment impact, examples of environmental aspects include:

1. Emissions to air via smoke or fumes;
2. Waste water discharge;
3. The potential for accidental chemical spill;
4. The generation of waste and disposal of waste;
5. The use of resources, including water and energy;
6. The use of recycled materials;

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7. Noise and vibration;
8. Purchased raw materials;
9. Transportation of products;
10. Use of products and services;
11. End of life issues – recycling and disposal.

Significant aspects will be those that have significant environmental impact and over which the organization has control or sufficient influence.

1.1.2 How to Identify Environmental Aspects

The next step is to identify the environmental aspects for each activity, product and service. For each environmental aspect that is identified, you should list any quantitative information that is applicable. For instance, if an activity emits air pollutants, state the amount (i.e. 543 tons of Co^2 per year, or 3.5 Kg of particulate matter per hour). The following is a list of additional information to include, if applicable:

1. Compliance obligations;
2. Other relevant requirements;
3. Permits and licences;
4. Record keeping requirements;
5. Pollution controls or treatment;
6. Best management practices;
7. Monitoring requirements.

An initial review of information and baseline data (e.g. annual costs and quantities of energy use, water use, waste and raw materials) will help you to prepare a list of environmental aspects for your organization. Consideration should be given to environmental aspects related to your organization's activities, products and services such as:

1. The design and development of its facilities, processes, products and services;
2. The acquisition of raw materials, including extraction;
3. The types operational or manufacturing processes, including warehousing;
4. The operation and maintenance of facilities, organizational assets and infrastructure;
5. The environmental performance and practices of external providers;
6. Methods of product transportation and service delivery, including packaging;
7. The storage, use and end of life treatment of products;
8. Waste management, including re-use, refurbishing, recycling and disposal.

The environmental aspects need to be regularly reviewed to establish whether the significance to the organization has changed and therefore whether it needs some form of control. Environmental aspects should be categorised as follows:

Condition	Definition
Normal	Aspects resulting from operations which are planned activities occurring within standard operational hours of your organization (e.g. Monday - Friday, 8 am to 6 pm).

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Condition	Definition
Abnormal	Aspects arising from operations which can be unplanned, in addition to standard working practices or occur outside of normal operational hours (e.g. overnight). Examples may include shut-down and start-up conditions, deliveries of goods and materials or the breakdown of equipment requiring unscheduled repair.
Emergency	Aspects resulting from reasonably foreseeable emergency situations which may be considered an emergency, in general creating a threat to human life or business continuity (e.g. fire, flooding or major spillages).

Aspects can be identified for outsourced processes, especially aspects that relate to where the organization retains the liability for the conformity with an environmental requirement. Although environmental aspects may not be directly attributable to the design stage, environmental aspects at other stages of the life cycle will be influenced through actions taken at the design stage.

An initial review of site information and baseline data (e.g. annual costs and quantities of energy use, water use, waste and raw materials) will help you to prepare a list of environmental aspects for your company.

A change management process is usually beneficial to consider the possible consequences of proposed changes that may impact on environmental performance. Your organizations should not define the scope in such a way that they deliberately or unintentionally omit activities, products, services or facilities which can have a significant aspect or avoid a compliance obligation.

Organizations will demonstrate their understanding of the scope through identifying aspects, establishing actions and objectives and developing operational control and influence.

1.1.3 How to Identify Risks & Opportunities for Each Aspect

Review existing environmental aspects evaluation processes so that an identification of risks and opportunities is undertaken for each environmental aspect and related compliance obligation.

Your organization should use existing information, where available, to identify impacts at different levels of granularity, for different stages of the life cycle. This could include using knowledge of specific impacts relating to a particular product, service or supplier, for example water vulnerability or resource scarcity.

Consideration should be given to compliance obligations from interested parties relating to environmental aspects, for example a compliance obligation associated with an airline operator's need to reduce fuel burn from taxiing activities.

While it is not necessary to undertake detailed research or have dialogue with interested parties, doing so may result in a more robust list of environmental impacts and risks, and opportunities for each aspect.

1.1.4 What is an Environmental Impact?

An **environmental impact** is any change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from an organization's activities, products or services. A cause-and-effect relationship exists between environmental aspects and environmental impacts, respectively.

For instance, an environmental aspect, or cause, can be the emission of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), while the environmental impact, or effect, is ozone depletion. To comply with ISO 14001, Clause 6.1.2, the following five actions should be taken:

1. Identify all of your organization's activities, products and services;

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