

ELEMENTS OF ISO 14001

ISO/DIS 14001 is one of a series of emerging international environmental management standards aimed at promoting continual improvement in company environmental performance through the adoption and implementation of an environmental management system. The (draft) standard specifies the core elements of an EMS, but contains only those elements that may be objectively audited for certification or self-declaration purposes. A companion guidance standard, ISO/DIS 14004 includes examples, descriptions and options that aid in the implementation of an EMS and in integrating the EMS into overall management practices. It is not intended for use by certification/registration bodies.

ISO/DIS 14001 defines an overall environmental management system, closely modeled on the ISO 9000 quality systems standard, and covers the following key elements:

- **Establishment of an appropriate environmental policy** that is documented and communicated to employees and made available to the public, and which includes a commitment to continual improvement and pollution prevention, regulatory compliance and a framework for setting objectives;
- **A planning phase** that covers the identification of the environmental aspects of the organization's activities, identification and access to legal requirements, establishment and documentation of objectives and targets consistent with the policy, and establishment of a program for achieving said targets and objectives (including the designation of responsible individuals, necessary means and timeframes);
- **Implementation and operation of the EMS** including the definition, documentation and communication of roles and responsibilities, provision of appropriate training, assurance of adequate internal and external communication, written management system documentation as well as appropriate document control procedures, documented procedures for operational controls, and documented and communicated emergency response procedures;
- **Checking and corrective action procedures**, including procedures for regular monitoring and measurement of key characteristics of the operations and activities, procedures for dealing with situations of non-conformity, specific record maintenance procedures and procedures for auditing the performance of the EMS;
- **Periodic management reviews of the overall EMS** to ensure its suitability, adequacy and effectiveness in light of changing circumstances.

The EMS as outlined in ISO 14001 provides a structured process for the achievement of continual improvement, the rate and extent of which is determined by the organization in light of economic and other circumstances. Although some improvement in environmental performance can be expected due to the adoption of a systematic approach, it should be understood that the EMS is a tool which enables the organization to achieve and systematically control the level of environmental performance that it sets itself. The establishment of an EMS will not, in itself, necessarily result in an immediate reduction of adverse environmental impact. Indeed, care needs to be taken that the mere establishment of an EMS does not lull the organization into a false sense of security. But effectively used, an EMS should enable an organization to improve its environmental performance and avoid or reduce adverse environmental impacts over time.