



Checklist of Mandatory Documentation Required by ISO 14001:2015

WHITE PAPER

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BASIC OVERVIEW

Many companies go overboard with documentation in the belief that they need to document every single process that is in place in their organization, without realizing that this is not necessary to meet the requirements of the ISO 14001 standard. In the standard there are several mandatory processes, but these are not required to be documented procedures. The standard also identifies many records that need to be maintained, which are generated by the processes of the environmental management system. Below is discussed which documents and records are mandatory, and which are optional.

Which documents and records are required?

Mandatory Documents	ISO 14001:2015 Clause
Scope of the Environmental Management System	4.3
Environmental Policy	5.2
Procedure for Identification and Evaluation of Environmental Aspects (including criteria for determining the significance)	6.1.2
Environmental Objectives and plans for achieving them	6.2.1
Operational Control Procedures	8.1
Procedure for Emergency Preparedness and Response	8.2

Mandatory Records	ISO 14001:2015 Clause
List of Interested Parties, Legal and Other Requirements	4.2, 6.1.3
Risks and opportunities that need to be addressed	6.1.1
Compliance obligations record	6.1.3, 9.1.2

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These are the documents and records that are required to be maintained for the ISO 14001 environmental management system, but you should also maintain any other records that you have identified as necessary to ensure your management system can function, be maintained, and improve over time.

Commonly used non-mandatory documents

Non-Mandatory Procedures	ISO 14001 Clause
Determining Context of the Organization and Interested Parties	4.1, 4.2
Competence, Training and Awareness Procedure	7.2, 7.3
Evidence on EMS Communication	7.4
Procedure for Control of Documents and Records	7.5
Procedure for Monitoring & Measurement	9.1
Procedure for Evaluation of Compliance (Legal & Other Requirements)	9.1.2
Procedure for Internal Audit	9.2
Procedure for Nonconformity and Corrective Action	10.2

While ISO 14001 does not require that you document all of the procedures, there are several processes that are mandatory to have in place in order to create the required records that are outlined in the first section. Remember these processes and procedures are not required to be documented; however, many companies choose to do so. One rule of thumb when deciding if you want to document a process is this: if your organization needs a written document to ensure consistency between employees, then you should document it. In many cases this is the best way to ensure that your environmental management system is reliably implemented.

How to structure documents and records

Determining Context of the Organization and Interested Parties

This is a new requirement of the standard and it is a good idea to document the process of determining the context and identifying interested parties and their expectation since it is done for the first time. This document should include all internal and external issues to be considered as well as the process and responsibilities for identification of interested parties and their needs and expectations. [Procedure for Determining Context of the Organization and Interested Parties](#) can be of great help in implementation of these new requirements.

For more information see: [Determining the context of the organization in ISO 14001](#) and [How to determine interested parties according to ISO 14001:2015](#).

EMS Scope

This document is usually rather short, and written at the beginning of the ISO 14001 implementation. Normally, it is a stand-alone document called [Scope of the EMS](#), although it can be merged into an [Environmental Manual](#), this defines the limitations of the environmental management system within your company, and identifies what elements are included and how they interact.

Learn more about the EMS Scope and structuring the documentation in our free [ISO 14001:2015 Foundations Online Course](#).

Environmental Policy

The [Environmental Policy](#) is intended to be a company's documented intention to meet legal compliance, prevent pollution, and continually improve. The Policy is a focus for the company to work toward and should readily convey the goal of the organization. It is often documented in an Environmental Manual and sometimes posted throughout the organization as a way of communicating to all employees, since it is important that every employee understand how the Policy relates to his or her job. For more information, see [How to Write an ISO 14001 Environmental Policy](#).

Risks and Opportunities that need to be addressed

According to the 2015 revision of ISO 14001, the risks and opportunities regarding the EMS must be identified and addressed, but there is no requirement to use any methodology or write a procedure. The standard only requires risks and opportunities that need to be addressed to be documented. The process of addressing risks and opportunities includes consideration of internal and external issues relevant to the EMS, interested parties, scope of the EMS as well as the environmental aspects and compliance

obligation. The easiest way to fulfill this requirement is to merge the risk and opportunities addressing process with identification and evaluation of environmental aspects.

For more information read: [The role of risk management in the ISO 14001:2015 standard](#) and [Risk Management in ISO 14001:2015 – What, why and how?](#)

Procedure for Identification and Evaluation of Environmental Aspects (with criteria for determining significance)

ISO 14001:2015 require companies to document all environmental aspects in the company and associate them with environmental impacts, and also significant environmental aspects and criteria for determining significance of the aspects. The best way to document the criteria is through [Procedure for Identification and Evaluation of Environmental Aspects and Risks](#), documenting environmental aspects and impacts, together with significant environmental aspects can be done through [Process Aspects Chart](#). For more information on environmental aspects, take a look at [4 steps in identification and evaluation of environmental aspects](#).

Compliance Obligation record

It is important for your company to know and understand the legal requirements that apply to your business practices. To make this work you need to devise a way to ensure you know which laws apply, and how you will keep up to date on legal changes. Beside legal obligations the obligations towards other interested parties must be identified as well. This is a part of identification of interested parties and their needs and expectations so it should be done during this process. The standard requires compliance obligations to be documented and evaluated on regular basis.

For more information, see [Compliance requirements according to ISO 14001:2015 – What has changed?](#) and [Demystification of legal requirements in ISO 14001](#).

Environmental Objectives and Plans for Achieving Them

The objectives are derived from the goal stated in the Environmental Policy, and are the main method used by companies to focus this goal into plans for improvement. The objectives are intended to be S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-based) and should have relevance at all levels of the company, meaning that all employees should understand how their jobs support meeting the environmental objectives and targets. The article [How to use good environmental objectives](#) gives more information on this process.

Competence, Training and Awareness records

Introducing environmental practices in an organization often requires additional training of relevant employees. The best way to define this process is by procedure that defines identification of training needs, training planning, conducting and evaluation of training effectiveness as well as assigning responsibilities for this. Although it is not requirement of the standard, the good practice shows that [Procedure for Competence, Training and Awareness](#) can be of great help to organization. The standard explicitly requires only the evidence of competence and that is [Training Record](#).

Evidence of EMS Communication

Hand in hand with awareness is how you will communicate to internal and external parties. How will you do this, and what information needs to be communicated? The standard only requires organization to keep evidence of its communication, as appropriate but considering the importance of communication process in EMS, it is recommended to have documented [Procedure for Communication](#) that describes it.

For more information, see: [How to perform communication related to the EMS](#).

Procedure for Control of Documents and Records

How do you approve, update, and re-approve your documents? When a document is changed, how do you identify changes, and make sure that people who need the current document have it and stop using older documents? How do you make sure the documents can be read, and how do you control documents that come from outside of your organization for use?

How do you maintain your records that show your EMS is implemented and maintained, including how you identify, store and protect the records so that they can be retrieved as necessary, for the correct amount of time, and destroyed when no longer needed but not before? If you need more information, see [A new approach to documented information in ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 14001 Control of Records](#).

Operational control procedures

When you have identified that your operations can have a negative impact on the environment (also called a significant environmental aspect), you need to put controls in place to ensure the impact does not happen and the environmental damage does not occur. In order to have a known and consistent way of doing what is needed to avoid the occurrence, you will need to create operational control procedures. If no situations are present, you need to ensure that there is no deviation from the policy, objectives & targets, or related significant aspects, and these procedures are not required.

For more information see: [Understanding relationship between environmental aspects and operational procedures](#).

Procedure for Emergency Preparedness and Response

When there is a risk that an emergency might happen (such as a chemical spill), you need to have plans in place to respond and react to the emergency and limit the environmental damage you will cause. Also it is necessary to ensure that the emergency plan will be followed by the employees, and this is done by testing the emergency response plans and periodically review and revise the process and plans. Learn more with [ISO 14001 emergency preparedness and response](#) and [5 steps to set up an emergency plan according to ISO 14001](#).

Monitoring performance information

When you identify a key characteristic of a process, you will also need to determine whether this characteristic can have a significant environmental impact if it is not controlled by the company. When this is the case, the organization needs to document what information needs to be monitored so that employees can react to changes in performance and avoid the environmental impact.

For more information, see: [Environmental performance evaluation](#) and [5 Tips to improve your environmental management system performance](#).

Calibration records

In your processes, you may need to monitor and measure critical elements of the EMS to ensure compliance with legal requirements. As an example, you may need to measure the concentration of a chemical in your wastewater. When you do this, you need to use calibrated equipment to ensure your measurements are accurate, and maintain records of these calibrations.

Internal audit

How do you audit your environmental management system to make sure that it is performing as planned and is effective? Who is responsible for planning and carrying out the audits? How do you report results and what records are kept? How do you follow up on corrective actions noted in audits? Learn more in this article about the [Internal Audits in the EMS: Five main steps](#). Keep records of these activities to show EMS conformance and improvement.

Also try our practical [ISO 14001:2015 Internal Auditor Online Course](#) to learn how to perform this procedure in your company.

Nonconformity and corrective action

What controls are in place, and who is responsible, to make sure that environmental non-conformity is addressed? How do you ensure that corrections are made, and what records are kept of the process? Find out more here: [Environmental Nonconformity Management: How is ISO 14001 different from ISO 9001](#). Corrective Actions: How do you review non-conformities, determine causes, and evaluate the need for actions to correct them? How do you implement the necessary actions, review that the actions were effective, and keep records of the actions taken? With the environmental management system you will find that you have non-conformances occur within your processes that you will need to correct; and when you investigate the root cause of these problems you will have corrective actions and preventive actions taken. You will need to keep records of these activities to show improvement. Learn how to do this with [Corrective and Preventive Actions to support Environmental Management](#).

For more information, please take a look at this useful handbook: [Managing ISO Documentation: A Plain English Guide](#).

Useful resources

These online materials will help you with ISO 14001:2015 implementation:

- Here you can download a [free preview of the ISO 14001 Documentation Toolkit](#) – in this free preview you will be able to see the Table of Contents of each of the mentioned documented procedures, as well as a few sections from each document.
- [Conformio](#) – online software that can be used as document management system (DMS) and provides a detailed list of ISO 14001 implementation steps.



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