

# ISO 14001:2026

## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Summary of changes in the 2026 revision





## ISO 14001:2026

The International Standard for Environmental Management Systems (EMS) has taken a step forward with the official publication of **ISO 14001:2026**.

This revised standard replaces the 2015 version, ensuring that environmental management systems remain relevant in evolving global conditions. The 2026 revision reacts to global shifts such as climate change, biodiversity, ESG, and supply chain issues.

While the update introduces several enhancements, the changes in terms of new requirements are considered minor. However, depending on the scope and complexity of the management system the effort required to meet the new standard may well be significant.

Organisations already certified to ISO 14001:2015 should find the transition manageable without the need for major changes to its existing system.

## HIGH LEVEL CHANGES

1. **Life Cycle Perspective:** Organisations should move beyond just "considering" life cycle and look for how it is integrated into the actual scope and aspects determination.
2. **Climate Change Integration:** In addition to climate change, other environmental conditions are added for the analysis of the organisational context, such as use of natural resources, pollution levels and biological diversity.
3. **Management of Change:** A new dedicated clause (6.3) for planning and managing changes that are relevant to the EMS.
4. **Operational Planning and Control:** The focus is extended from the control of "outsourced processes" to control of "externally provided processes, products and services".
5. **Documentation Flexibility:** A shift from "maintaining/retaining documented information" to ensuring it is "available" as evidence.
6. **Annex A:** The guidance in Annex A has been substantially revised for various clauses to support interpretation of the requirements.

## CLAUSE BY CLAUSE CHANGES

The following table outlines the changes that organisations need to review.

Clause	2015 Requirement	2026 Change/New Requirement
4.1 Organisation and its context	Issues shall include environmental conditions.	Specific mention to environmental conditions such as <b>*pollution levels, availability of natural resources, climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem health.</b>
4.2 Interested parties	Which of these needs and expectations become its compliance obligations.	This is now expanded: which of these needs and expectations become its compliance obligations <b>and will be addressed through the environmental management system.</b> Specific mention to needs and expectations related to <b>environmental conditions</b> mentioned above* Added Note 1 and 2 about interested parties and expectations.
4.3 Scope	When determining the scope, the organisation shall consider its authority and ability to exercise control and influence.	This is now expanded: When determining the scope, the organisation shall consider its authority and ability to exercise control an influence <b>over life cycle approach of activities, products, and services.</b>
5.2 Policy	"Fulfil" compliance obligations. Policy includes Other specific commitments.	"Fulfil" replaced by " <b>meet compliance obligations</b> " Added Note: Other specific commitment to protect the environment can include: <b>preservation or conservation of natural resources; sustainable resource use; climate change mitigation and adaptation; or protection of biodiversity and ecosystems.</b>
6.1.1 General	Larger clause than in 2026 version	Restructured wording and reference to clauses 6.1.2 to 6.1.5
6.1.2 Aspects	No specific section for potential emergency situations.	<b>Emergency situations</b> must now be determined separately from abnormal operations. Added Note added for life cycle.
6.1.4 Risk / Opportunities	Clause 6.1.4 was Planning actions	Change to title, <b>now 6.1.4 "Risk and Opportunities"</b> , previously in clause 6.1.1
6.1.5 Planning action	No clause 6.1.5	The content in 6.1.5 was previously in 6.1.4

Clause	2015 Requirement	2026 Change/New Requirement
6.3 Change Management ( <b>NEW</b> )	Addressed indirectly in various clauses.	<b>New Clause 6.3:</b> Requires a structured approach to EMS related <b>change management</b> .
7.5 Documentation	No changes to clause.	Terminology now standardised in the whole standard: all EMS records must be <b>“available as documented information”</b> , no specific changes to clause 7.5.
8.1 Operational Planning and Control	Outsourcing to be controlled or influenced was required, but less explicit.	<b>“Outsourced processes”</b> replaced by <b>“externally provided process(es), products or services that are relevant to the intended outcomes of the environmental management system”</b> .
8.2 Emergency preparedness and response	Linked to clause 6.1.1 planning and risks/opp.	Now linked to potential emergency situations determined in clause <b>6.1.2 Environmental aspects</b>
9.1.1 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation	Minor changes.	Minor change to wording. Adding: The organisation shall evaluate its environmental performance <b>and the effectiveness of the environmental management system</b> .
9.1.3 Evaluation of compliance	“Fulfilment” of its compliance obligations.	<b>“Fulfilment”</b> replaced by <b>“if it’s meeting its compliance obligations”</b>
9.2 Internal audits	“Define the audit criteria and scope”.  Documented information required: Audit programme and audit results.	Expanded: “define <b>the audit objective(s)</b> , audit criteria and scope for each audit”  Added requirement for documented information: also <b>“evidence of the implementation of the audit programme(s)”</b> .
9.3 Management review	Outputs were included in clause 9.3.	This clause is now explicitly split into three sub-clauses: 9.3.1 General, 9.3.2 Inputs, and <b>9.3.3 Results (replacing "outputs")</b> .
10.1 General	Clause 10.3 for Continual improvement.	Wording for continual improvement expanded in clause 10.1, removing clause 10.3

## **Guidance - Annex A**

The guidance in Annex A has been improved. WCS would urge all interested parties from auditors, managers, certified organisation to review the guidance and determine if any improvements could be made to the EMS.

## **What about the transition to ISO 14001:2026 from ISO 14001:2015?**

Organisations have three years to transition to the new standard. The new standard was released on the 15th April 2026, therefore all WCS ISO 14001:2015 certificates will expire on the 16th April 2029 (subject to change).

WCS will be able to transition its certified clients by three methods:

1. By completing a short transition “special” audit.
2. During surveillance audits with additional time added to cover the changes.
3. During recertification audit with an additional time added to cover the changes.

For more information contact WCS.

### **World Certification Services Ltd.**

Station Court, 4 Station Cottage,

Ormskirk Road, Aintree, Liverpool, L9 5AA

Tel. 0151 924 7474

[info@world-cert.co.uk](mailto:info@world-cert.co.uk)

[www.world-cert.co.uk](http://www.world-cert.co.uk)