



ISO-Cert Online Ltd
Efficient Certification Solutions

INFORMATION SHEET

ISO 14001:2026 — Requirements & Transition from ISO 14001:2015

The environmental management standard used by more than half a million organisations worldwide has been revised. This sheet explains what has changed, what the new edition requires, and the practical steps to move your certification across before the transition deadline.

Published 15 April 2026 • Replaces ISO 14001:2015 • Transition window 3 years • Deadline approx. April 2029

01 What has happened

ISO 14001:2026 is the fourth edition of the world's leading standard for environmental management systems (EMS). It was published on 15 April 2026 and formally replaces ISO 14001:2015, including the separate climate change amendment (Amd 1:2024) that was issued for the 2015 edition.

Importantly, this is an evolution, not a rewrite. The standard keeps the same familiar Harmonised Structure (Annex SL) and the Plan–Do–Check–Act model. No existing 2015 requirements have been removed — the revision clarifies, modernises and sharpens what was already there, and adds one new clause. For most organisations with a working EMS, the transition means reviewing and adjusting selected elements rather than rebuilding the system.

EDITION 4th Builds on ~30 years of use	STRUCTURE Unchanged Annex SL & PDCA retained	SCALE OF CHANGE Moderate Targeted, not transformative	2015 CERTIFICATES Stay valid Until the deadline
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02 The key changes in ISO 14001:2026

The revision concentrates on a handful of themes. The most significant for day-to-day management are summarised below.

1. Climate, biodiversity & resources made explicit — Clauses 4.1 & 4.2 · Context

When determining the context of the organisation and the needs of interested parties, you must now explicitly consider climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem health, pollution levels, and the availability of natural resources — rather than treating them as implied. Where these factors are relevant, they must be documented and linked to your risks, objectives and controls.

2. Planning of changes (new clause) — Clause 6.3 · New requirement

A brand-new clause introduces systematic change management, mirroring ISO 9001 and ISO 45001. Where changes to materials, suppliers, processes or organisational structure could affect environmental performance, they must be planned, controlled and their effectiveness monitored. Organisations without a formal change process will need to create one.

3. Restructured risk and opportunity process — Clause 6 · Risks & opportunities

Requirements for risks and opportunities have been clarified and reorganised, with a stronger link to action planning. Emergency situations that carry environmental impact must be considered explicitly within the planning process.

4. Stronger life-cycle perspective — Clause 6.1 / 4.3 · Life cycle

The life-cycle perspective in the environmental aspects process is reinforced, and the scope of the EMS should reflect the organisation's control and influence across the full life cycle of its activities, products and services — including upstream supply-chain impacts.

5. From “outsourced” to “externally provided” — Clauses 8.1 & 8.2 · Operational control

Operational control now covers externally provided processes, products and services, broadening the previous focus on outsourced processes. Emergency preparedness (8.2) must also account for supplier-related situations over which you have control or influence.

6. Wider leadership & clearer documentation — Clause 5 & Clause 7 · Leadership & documentation

Leadership responsibilities extend to supporting leadership in non-management roles, and documentation requirements are clarified throughout — making it clearer what must be documented and what must be retained as evidence of implementation.

7. Substantially expanded guidance — Annex A · Guidance

The informative Annex A has been significantly extended with clarifications, examples and practical guidance. Although Annex A remains informative rather than mandatory, in practice it is the central reference for interpreting the requirements correctly and avoiding audit disputes.

03 2015 versus 2026 at a glance

Area	ISO 14001:2015	ISO 14001:2026
Context Cl. 4.1 / 4.2	Internal & external issues required; climate and biodiversity not named (climate added later via Amd 1:2024).	Climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem health, pollution and resource availability named as explicit considerations.
Change management Cl. 6.3	Change addressed only implicitly across various clauses.	Dedicated new clause requiring planned, controlled and monitored change.
Risks & opportunities Cl. 6	Required, but less structured.	Clarified and restructured; emergency situations considered explicitly.
Life cycle Cl. 6.1 / 4.3	Life-cycle perspective introduced.	Perspective strengthened; scope reflects control/influence across the full life cycle.
Operational control Cl. 8.1 / 8.2	Focus on “outsourced processes”.	Extended to “externally provided processes, products & services”; supplier emergencies covered.
Leadership Cl. 5	Top-management commitment.	Extended to support leadership in non-management roles.
Guidance Annex A	Informative annex.	Substantially expanded with examples and practical interpretation.

04 The transition timeline

Following publication, the International Accreditation Forum and accreditation bodies have adopted a three-year transition period. Your existing ISO 14001:2015 certificate remains valid throughout that window, but must be transitioned before it closes or it will cease to be valid.

Milestone	What it means for you
15 April 2026	ISO 14001:2026 published; the three-year transition clock starts.
~18 months after publication (around late 2027)	Certification bodies are generally expected to stop issuing new certificates against the 2015 edition; audits begin moving to 2026.
2027–2028	Certification bodies complete their own accreditation (e.g. via UKAS) to audit against the 2026 edition and begin offering transition audits.
Approx. April 2029	End of the transition period. After this date, certificates issued to ISO 14001:2015 are no longer valid.

CONFIRM YOUR EXACT DATE

Published sources cite the deadline as falling around April–May 2029. The precise date and intermediate milestones are set by the International Accreditation Forum / Global Accreditation Cooperation and your accreditation body — always confirm the exact deadline directly with your certification body.

05 How to manage your transition — a six-step roadmap

For a mature, well-maintained EMS the transition typically takes around 3–6 months of focused work (often 30–90 person-hours spread over the year). Multi-site or less mature systems should allow more time. We recommend starting early rather than waiting for your certification body to raise it at a surveillance audit.

Step 1 Obtain and study the new standard

Purchase ISO 14001:2026 (or BS EN ISO 14001:2026) and read it alongside the expanded Annex A guidance, so the right people understand exactly what has changed.

Step 2 Raise awareness & train

Brief top management and the staff who run the EMS on the new requirements — especially context, change management and life-cycle/supply-chain expectations.

Step 3 Carry out a gap analysis

Compare your current EMS against the 2026 edition clause by clause, identify where you fall short, and produce a prioritised action plan.

Step 4 Update the EMS

Close the gaps: add a Clause 6.3 change-management process, broaden your context analysis to climate, biodiversity, pollution and resources, extend controls to externally provided processes, and refresh documentation.

Step 5 Embed, audit & review

Operate the updated system, run an internal audit against the 2026 requirements, and hold a management review so there is evidence of implementation before assessment.

Step 6 Book your transition audit

Arrange the transition assessment with your certification body — ideally combined with a scheduled surveillance or recertification audit to minimise cost and disruption. Complete it before the deadline to keep your certificate continuous.

TIP

Aligning the transition with your existing surveillance or recertification cycle usually means no extra audit visit. Leaving it until close to the deadline risks scheduling pressure across the whole industry — and a lapsed certificate if you miss it.

How ISO-Cert Online Ltd can help

We support organisations through every stage of the move to ISO 14001:2026, so the transition feels routine rather than reactive:

- Gap analysis of your current EMS against the 2026 requirements, with a prioritised roadmap
- Updated templates, procedures and internal-audit checklists mapped to the new clause structure
- Guidance on the new Clause 6.3 change-management process and expanded context requirements
- Awareness and auditor training on the revised standard
- Support coordinating your transition audit with your certification body

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