

Bulletin-2 Sep-26

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ISO 14001:2015 / 2026



ISO 14001:2026 — what the revision means for your certification

The revised edition of ISO 14001 has been published. This bulletin summarises what has changed, what has not, and the steps we recommend so your transition is straightforward. As with recent ISO revisions, this is an evolution of the standard you already meet, not a rewrite.

Published 15 Apr 2026 Revised edition	Transition ends Apr 2029 Expected 3-year window	Your current certificate Stays valid Throughout the transition
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THE SHORT VERSION

ISO 14001:2026 keeps the framework you know. **The Annex SL structure, the environmental management system fundamentals and the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle all remain.** The revision sharpens the standard's focus on today's environmental priorities — biodiversity, pollution, resource use and the supply chain — adds one genuinely new clause (change management) and expands the guidance annex.

If you maintain a healthy ISO 14001:2015 system — especially if you engaged properly with the 2024 climate-change amendment — the gap to 2026 is modest and manageable within the transition period. There is no need to rebuild your environmental management system.

WHAT HAS CHANGED

Seven clauses have changed in ways worth acting on, and one clause is entirely new. The five below carry the most practical weight; a handful of smaller refinements follow.

Clause 4.1 Context of the organisation	Broader environmental context The context you must consider now explicitly includes biodiversity, ecosystem health, pollution levels and natural-resource availability, alongside climate change (already mandatory via the 2024 amendment). Assess whether each is a material issue for your organisation; where it is not, record that you considered it; where it is, let it flow into your objectives, aspects register and controls. This is not a call for ecological surveys — it is a requirement to show the questions were asked and answered.
Clause 5.1 Leadership & commitment	Leadership accountability extended Top management's responsibilities now extend to supporting environmental leadership across all relevant roles, not just a dedicated EMS manager. Auditors will look for genuine ownership of environmental responsibility at senior level and across functions — beyond a signed policy and attendance at management review.
Clause 6.3 Planning of changes	Change management (New clause) The only genuinely new requirement. You must determine, plan and manage changes that could affect the intended outcomes of your EMS, keeping planned changes distinct from emergencies. If you run an integrated system alongside ISO 9001 you will recognise this; for a standalone ISO 14001 system it means a documented process to evaluate EMS-relevant changes — new equipment, products, facilities or suppliers — before they are made.

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Clause 8.1
Operational planning & control

Supply-chain scope widened

“Outsourced processes” becomes “externally provided processes, products and services”, extending your environmental accountability further along the value chain. Procurement criteria, supplier assessments and contractual environmental requirements may all need revisiting, so a wider set of external providers is covered.

Clause 9.2.2
Internal audit

Audits need defined objectives

Internal audits must now have defined objectives, in addition to the existing scope and criteria — you should be clear what each audit is trying to achieve before it begins. For most systems this is a template and planning update.

FURTHER CHANGES

Clause 6.1 (risks and opportunities) is restructured — a new 6.1.4 makes explicit that environmental issues identified under Clause 4 are not automatically business risks or opportunities, and life-cycle guidance under 6.1.2 is clearer. Clause 9.3 (management review) is reorganised into General, Inputs and Results (9.3.1–9.3.3) with the content largely unchanged. Clause 10 (improvement) is simplified, consolidating the former 10.1 and 10.3 into a single clause. These are mainly template and structure updates.

WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED

- The Annex SL harmonised structure and the Plan-Do-Check-Act basis of the EMS are unchanged.
- The core intent of every clause is preserved — this is an evolution, not a rewrite.
- Your existing environmental policy, aspects register, objectives and records remain the right foundation to build on.
- The revision brings ISO 14001 into **closer alignment with ISO 9001, ISO 45001, ISO 50001 and ISO 27001**, making integrated management systems easier to run.

THE EXPANDED ANNEX A

Guidance, not new obligations

The revision significantly expands the informative Annex A with clarifications, worked examples and practical guidance. Like all annex guidance it creates no new requirements and cannot, on its own, be the basis of a non-conformity — but it is the clearest steer on how the new expectations around context, change management and life-cycle thinking will be interpreted, and is worth reading once you have the standard.

TRANSITION TIMELINE

February 2024 — Climate-change amendment (Amd 1:2024) published — already applies

Summer 2025 — Draft International Standard released and approved

5 January 2026 — Final Draft confirmed the technical content

15 April 2026 — ISO 14001:2026 published — the transition period begins

2027–2028 — Certification bodies complete accreditation and begin transition audits; first 2026 certificates issued

April 2029 — Transition deadline — ISO 14001:2015 is withdrawn

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WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR CERTIFICATE

- Your ISO 14001:2015 certificate **remains valid** for the whole transition period.
- You do not need to recertify from scratch — a transition audit checks the gap between your current system and the 2026 requirements, after which your certificate is reissued to the new edition.
- Aligning your transition with a scheduled surveillance or recertification audit is the most efficient route and usually avoids a separate visit.
- Auditor capacity tightens as the 2029 deadline approaches, so planning early gives you the most flexibility over timing.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND YOU DO NOW

Straight away

- Extend your context analysis (Clause 4.1) to biodiversity, pollution and natural-resource availability alongside climate change — and record your reasoning where these are not material.
- Draft a simple change-management procedure for the new Clause 6.3.
- Add an “audit objective” field to your internal audit templates (Clause 9.2.2).

During the transition

- Review procurement and supplier controls against the wider Clause 8.1 scope.
- Restructure management review records to the new 9.3.1–9.3.3 format.
- Fold the new topics into your internal audit programme and book your transition audit in good time.

HOW ISO-CERT ONLINE LTD WILL SUPPORT YOU

As your certification body, we are updating our own accreditation to the 2026 edition and will contact you in good time to plan your transition — normally combined with your next recertification audit, so it fits your existing schedule.

We would advise that you check the Messages Board in the **ISO-Cert Unite Portal** regularly, as this is where we will be issuing further updates, regarding this subject and other.

If you would like a gap review against the 2026 requirements before then, get in touch and we will arrange it.

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