

4.4.4 DOCUMENTATION

ISO 14001 4.4.4 IN BRIEF

Element 4.4.4 of ISO 14001 is purely bureaucratic; it requires an organization to provide information on the framework of their EMS, and pointers to where additional relevant information can be found.

ISO 14001 4.4.4 EMS DOCUMENTATION says:

The organization shall establish and maintain information, in paper or electronic form, to:

- a) describe the core elements of the management system and their interaction;
- b) provide direction to related documentation.

Levels of Documents

It is generally accepted that there are four levels of documents in an EMS:

1. High level documents that state the organization's commitments. The Environmental Policy is a Level 1 document.
2. Management system procedures, which describe the core elements of the EMS, how they function, and who is responsible for each. ISO 14001 element 4.4.4 pertains to this level of document.
3. Standard operating procedures (SOP), which are relevant to the whole organization or to specific departments.

4. Work instructions, i.e., detailed step-by-step information on how to carry out a specific task or operation.

ISO 14001 Management System Procedures Summarized

Environmental Policy

Proclaims the organization's commitment to environmental management.

Planning

Environmental Aspects – Assessment of which operations may impact the environment, and identification of the activities, products, or services with significant impacts.

Legal and Other Requirements –

Finding and maintaining an inventory of all relevant legislation and regulations concerning the environment, and any voluntary environmental commitments.

Environmental Objectives and Targets

– Goals for improvement set by the organization and applied, where appropriate, at department or group level.

Environmental Management

Program(s) – Action plans and schedules for achieving environmental objectives and targets.

Implementation and Operation

Structure and Responsibility – Roles, responsibilities, and authority for planning and implementing the EMS, including those for the environmental management representative (EMR).

Training, Awareness and Competence – Identifying EMS training needs, implementing training, and improving the competence of all personnel in the organization whose work may impact the environment.

Communication – Internal and external communications on the EMS.

EMS Documentation – Overall description of the environmental management system.

Document Control – Ensuring EMS documents are properly developed and authorized, and are retained, up-to-date, secure, and available where and when needed.

Operational Control – Process control technology used to prevent pollution; and documented procedures designed to control key operations that may have an impact on the environment. Suppliers and contractors are included in the requirements of the EMS.

Emergency Preparedness and Response – Potential environmental emergencies are identified, response plans made and tested.

Checking and Corrective Action

Monitoring and Measurement – Monitoring programs track environmental performance; instruments used for this purpose are properly calibrated; and regulatory compliance is routinely evaluated.

Non-Conformance, Corrective and Preventive Action – When non-conformances occur in the EMS, corrective and preventive actions are prompt, and are appropriate to the magnitude of actual or potential environmental impacts.

Records – As with other documents, records are up-to-date, secure, available where and when needed, and retained for a specified time.

EMS Audit – Internal audits are done regularly to assess whether the EMS conforms with ISO 14001.

Management Review

Top management periodically assesses the suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness of the EMS.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Management system procedures are second level procedures in an EMS document hierarchy, and describe the core elements of ISO 14001.
- ISO 14001 consists of 17 elements in five sections: Policy, Planning, Implementation and Operation, Checking and Corrective Action, and Management Review.
- Each element of ISO 14001 is interdependent with the other 16 elements, and all are essential to a well-functioning EMS.