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About ISO

What is ISO?

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is the world's largest developer of voluntary International Standards. International Standards give state of the art specifications for products, services and good practice, helping to make industry more efficient and effective. Developed through global consensus, they help to break down barriers to international trade.

What we do

ISO develops International Standards. We were founded in 1947, and since then have published more than 19 000 International Standards covering almost all aspects of technology and business. From food safety to computers, and agriculture to healthcare, ISO International Standards impact all our lives.

Our story

The ISO story began in 1946 when delegates from 25 countries met at the Institute of Civil Engineers in London and decided to create a new international organization 'to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards'. In February 1947 the new organisation, ISO, officially began operations.

Since then,we have published over 19 000 International Standards covering almost all aspects of technology and manufacturing.

Today we have members from 164 countries and 3 335 technical bodies to take care of standard development. More than 150 people work full time for ISO's Central Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland.

Our name

Because 'International Organization for Standardization' would have different acronyms in different languages (IOS in English, OIN in French for *Organisation internationale de normalisation*), our founders decided to give it the short form ISO. ISO is derived from the Greek isos, meaning equal. Whatever the country, whatever the language, the short form of our name is always ISO.

ISO 9000 - Quality management

The ISO 9000 family addresses various aspects of quality management and contains some of ISO's best known standards. The standards provide guidance and tools for companies and organizations who want to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customer's requirements, and that quality is consistently improved.

There are many standards in the ISO 9000 family, including:

- ISO 9001:2008 - sets out the requirements of a quality management system
- ISO 9000:2005 - covers the basic concepts and language
- ISO 9004:2009 - focuses on how to make a quality management system more efficient and effective
- ISO 19011 - sets out guidance on internal and external audits of quality management systems.

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 9001:2008 sets out the criteria for a quality management system and is the only standard in the family that can be certified to (although this is not a requirement). It can be used by any organization, large or small, regardless of its field of activity. In fact ISO 9001:2008 is implemented by over one million companies and organizations in over 170 countries.

Quality Management Principles

The standard is based on a number of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach and continual improvement. These principles are explained in more detail in the pdf Quality Management Principles. Using ISO 9001:2008 helps ensure that customers get consistent, good quality products and services, which in turn brings many business benefits.

Audits

Checking that the system works is a vital part of ISO 9001:2008. An organization must perform internal audits to check how its quality management system is working. An organization may decide to invite an independent certification body to verify that it is in conformity to the standard, but there is no requirement for this. Alternatively, it might invite its clients to audit the quality system for themselves.

ISO 14000 - Environmental management

The ISO 14000 family addresses various aspects of environmental management. It provides practical tools for companies and organizations looking to identify and control their environmental impact and constantly improve their environmental performance. ISO 14001:2004 and ISO 14004:2004 focus on environmental management systems. The other standards in the family focus on specific environmental aspects such as life cycle analysis, communication and auditing.

ISO 14001:2004

ISO 14001:2004 sets out the criteria for an environmental management system and can be certified to. It does not state requirements for environmental performance, but maps out a framework that a company or organization can follow to set up an effective environmental management system. It can be used by any organization regardless of its activity or sector. Using ISO 14001:2004 can provide assurance to company management and employees as well as external stakeholders that environmental impact is being measured and improved.

The benefits of using ISO 14001:2004 can include:

- Reduced cost of waste management
- Savings in consumption of energy and materials
- Lower distribution costs
- Improved corporate image among regulators, customers and the public

ISO 26000 - Social Responsibility

Business and organizations do not operate in a vacuum. Their relationship to the society and environment in which they operate is a critical factor in their ability to continue to operate effectively. It is also increasingly being used as a measure of their overall performance.

ISO 26000 provides guidance on how businesses and organizations can operate in a socially responsible way. This means acting in an ethical and transparent way that contributes to the health and welfare of society.

ISO and social responsibility

ISO 26000:2010

ISO 26000:2010 provides guidance rather than requirements, **so it cannot be certified to unlike some other well-known ISO standards**. Instead, it helps clarify what social responsibility is, helps businesses and organizations translate principles into effective actions and shares best practices relating to social

responsibility, globally. It is aimed at all types of organizations regardless of their activity, size or location.

The standard was launched in 2010 following five years of negotiations between many different stakeholders across the world. Representatives from government, NGOs, industry, consumer groups and labour organizations around the world were involved in its development, which means it represents an international consensus.

ISO 50001 - Energy management

Using energy efficiently helps organizations save money as well as helping to conserve resources and tackle climate change. ISO 50001 supports organizations in all sectors to use energy more efficiently, through the development of an energy management system (EnMS).

ISO 50001:2011 – Energy Management System

ISO 50001 is based on the management system model of continual improvement also used for other well-known standards such as ISO 9001 or ISO 14001. This makes it easier for organizations to integrate energy management into their overall efforts to improve quality and environmental management.

ISO 50001:2011 provides a framework of requirements for organizations to:

- Develop a policy for more efficient use of energy
- Fix targets and objectives to meet the policy
- Use data to better understand and make decisions about energy use
- Measure the results
- Review how well the policy works, and
- Continually improve energy management.

ISO 31000 - Risk management

Risks affecting organizations can have consequences in terms of economic performance and professional reputation, as well as environmental, safety and societal outcomes. Therefore, managing risk effectively helps organizations to perform well in an environment full of uncertainty.

ISO 31000:2009

ISO 31000:2009, Risk management – Principles and guidelines, provides principles, framework and a process for managing risk. It can be used by any

organization regardless of its size, activity or sector. Using ISO 31000 can help organizations increase the likelihood of achieving objectives, improve the identification of opportunities and threats and effectively allocate and use resources for risk treatment. However, ISO 31000 cannot be used for certification purposes, but does provide guidance for internal or external audit programmes. Organizations using it can compare their risk management practices with an internationally recognised benchmark, providing sound principles for effective management and corporate governance.

What is OHSAS 18001?

OHSAS 18000 is an international occupational health and safety management system specification. It comprises two parts, 18001 and 18002 and embraces a number of other publications.

Benefits - How Can OHSAS Help?

The OHSAS specification is applicable to any organisation that wishes to:

- Establish an OH&S management system to eliminate or minimise risk to employees and other interested parties who may be exposed to OH&S risks associated with its activities
- Assure itself of its conformance with its stated OH&S policy
- Demonstrate such conformance to others
- Implement, maintain and continually improve an OH&S management system
- Make a self-determination and declaration of conformance with this OHSAS specification.
- Seek certification/registration of its OH&S management system by an external organisation

Essentially, OHSAS helps in a variety of respects... it helps: minimise risk to employees/etc; improve an existing OH&S management system; demonstrate diligence; gain assurance; etc. The benefits can be substabtial.

Benefits of International Standards...

International Standards bring technological, economic and societal benefits. They help to harmonize technical specifications of products and services making industry more efficient and breaking down barriers to international trade. Conformity to International Standards helps reassure consumers that products are safe, efficient and good for the environment.

Facts and figures about the benefits of standards

For more information about the benefits of standards consult our collection of studies on economic and social benefits

For business

International Standards are strategic tools and guidelines to help companies tackle some of the most demanding challenges of modern business. They ensure that business operations are as efficient as possible, increase productivity and help companies access new markets.

Benefits include:

- **Cost savings** - International Standards help optimise operations and therefore improve the bottom line
- **Enhanced customer satisfaction** - International Standards help improve quality, enhance customer satisfaction and increase sales
- **Access to new markets** - International Standards help prevent trade barriers and open up global markets
- **Increased market share** - International Standards help increase productivity and competitive advantage
- **Environmental benefits** - International Standards help reduce negative impacts on the environment

Businesses also benefit from taking part in the standard development process. Read more about the benefits of getting involved in standards development.

ISO benefits for business and governments

For Society

ISO has over 19 000 standards touching almost all aspects of daily life.

When products and services conform to International Standards consumers can have confidence that they are safe, reliable and of good quality. For example, ISO's standards on road safety, toy safety and secure medical packaging are just a selection of those that help make the world a safer place.

To make sure that the benefits of ISO International Standards are as broad as possible, ISO supports the involvement of consumers in standard development work with its Committee on consumer policy (COPOLCO).

International Standards on air, water and soil quality, on emissions of gases and radiation and environmental aspects of products contribute to efforts to preserve the environment and the health of citizens.

For government

ISO standards draw on international expertise and experience and are therefore a vital resource for governments when developing regulations.

National governments can make ISO standards a regulatory requirement (remember ISO standards themselves are voluntary). This has a number of benefits:

- **Expert opinion** - ISO standards are developed by experts. By integrating an ISO standard into national regulation, governments can benefit from the opinion of experts without having to call on their services directly.
- **Opening up world trade** - ISO standards are international and adopted by many governments. By integrating ISO standards into national regulation, governments help to ensure that requirements for imports and exports are the same the world over, therefore facilitating the movement of goods, services and technologies from country to country.