

# ISO/DIS 26000: Environmental Responsibility

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## 6.5 The Environment

### 6.5.1 Overview of the Environment

#### 6.5.1.1 Organizations and the Environment

Organizational decisions and activities inevitably impact the environment. These impacts stem from resource use (living and non-living), facility locations, pollution generation, and effects on natural habitats. Organizations should adopt an integrated approach that considers economic, social, and environmental factors to reduce environmental harm.

#### 6.5.1.2 The Environment and Social Responsibility

Global environmental issues—such as climate change, pollution, habitat loss, and species extinction—pose serious risks to societal health and security. As populations grow, sustainable consumption and production patterns must be developed. A comprehensive, systemic approach is necessary. Environmental responsibility is essential for human survival and prosperity and intersects with other social responsibility themes. Education and awareness are key. ISO 14000-series standards offer technical tools for performance evaluation, emissions reporting, life cycle assessments, and environmental labeling.

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### 6.5.2 Principles and Considerations

#### 6.5.2.1 Environmental Principles

Organizations should adopt the following principles:

- **Environmental Responsibility:** Go beyond compliance to address environmental burdens caused by operations, and work to improve performance across all areas of influence.
- **Precautionary Approach:** Take proactive measures even when scientific certainty is lacking if there is a risk of significant harm.
- **Environmental Risk Management:** Use risk-based methods to assess and reduce environmental impacts, and establish emergency preparedness systems.
- **Polluter Pays Principle:** Internalize the cost of pollution, ensuring polluters bear the financial burden of mitigation and cleanup.

#### 6.5.2.2 Environmental Considerations

Organizations should apply the following strategies:

- **Life Cycle Thinking:** Evaluate and reduce environmental impacts from cradle to grave.
  - **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** Conduct EIAs prior to launching new projects and use findings in decision-making.
  - **Cleaner Production and Eco-Efficiency:** Focus on efficient resource use, minimizing waste and emissions at the source.
  - **Product-Service System (PSS) Models:** Provide services rather than just products (e.g., leasing, pooling) to reduce resource use.
  - **Environmentally Sound Technologies:** Adopt and promote clean technologies.
  - **Sustainable Procurement:** Factor in the environmental and ethical performance of products/services throughout their life cycle.
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### 6.5.3 Environmental Issue 1: Prevention of Pollution

#### 6.5.3.1 Description

Pollution includes air emissions, water discharges, solid/liquid waste, and the use of hazardous chemicals. These pollutants harm ecosystems and human health directly and indirectly.

#### 6.5.3.2 Actions and Expectations

Organizations should:

- Identify and report pollution sources.
  - Track and report reductions in emissions, waste, and energy/water use.
  - Apply the waste hierarchy: reduce, reuse, recycle, treat, dispose.
  - Disclose hazardous substances and associated risks.
  - Avoid banned or high-risk chemicals, including POPs, carcinogens, and PBTs.
  - Implement chemical accident prevention and emergency response programs involving all stakeholders.
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### 6.5.4 Environmental Issue 2: Sustainable Resource Use

#### 6.5.4.1 Description

Sustainable resource use ensures long-term availability. Use of renewable resources should not exceed natural replenishment rates. Non-renewable resource use should be offset by renewables.

Focus areas:

- **Energy Efficiency:** Reduce energy consumption across all operations.
- **Water Conservation:** Promote reuse and ensure fair access.
- **Material Efficiency:** Minimize environmental burden from raw material extraction and use.

#### **6.5.4.2 Actions and Expectations**

Organizations should:

- Track usage of energy, water, and raw materials.
  - Implement efficiency measures.
  - Shift from non-renewables to sustainable sources.
  - Maximize use of recycled water and materials.
  - Promote fair access to shared resources.
  - Encourage responsible consumption behavior.
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### **6.5.5 Environmental Issue 3: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

#### **6.5.5.1 Description**

GHG emissions from human activities are major contributors to climate change, which results in rising temperatures, extreme weather, and ecosystem changes. Organizations must reduce emissions (mitigation) and adapt to future impacts (adaptation).

#### **6.5.5.2 Actions and Expectations**

##### **Mitigation:**

- Identify and track GHG emissions using recognized methodologies.
- Reduce emissions via renewable energy and efficient practices.
- Avoid GHG release from land use changes and equipment.
- Explore emissions trading and offset programs responsibly.

##### **Adaptation:**

- Integrate climate risks into planning.
  - Design infrastructure resilient to floods, droughts, and heatwaves.
  - Promote technology to ensure food, water, and healthcare access.
  - Enhance public awareness and resilience-building measures.
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### **6.5.6 Environmental Issue 4: Protection and Restoration of Natural Habitats**

#### **6.5.6.1 Description**

Human activities have caused large-scale habitat degradation and biodiversity loss. Organizations can help by protecting ecosystems and restoring natural habitats, which provide vital services such as food, water, and pollution absorption.

#### **6.5.6.2 Actions and Expectations**

Organizations should:

- Identify and minimize impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Participate in market mechanisms valuing ecosystem preservation.
- Prioritize avoiding damage, then restoring, and finally compensating for environmental losses.
- Develop integrated land, water, and ecosystem management strategies.
- Protect endangered species and natural habitats.
- Plan development to minimize ecological disruption.
- Apply sustainable agriculture, fishing, and forestry methods.
- Use certified sustainable suppliers.
- Avoid promoting invasive species or actions that risk species extinction.

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### **6.6 Fair Operating Practices**

Fair operating practices address ethical behavior in relationships with other organizations, governments, suppliers, contractors, competitors, and member associations.