



**Bureau of Assessment Services**  
Managing Assurance with Confidence

# Transition Planning & Guidance

## ISO 14001:2015: Environmental Management Systems



**Bureau of Assessment Services**  
Managing Assurance with Confidence

**P.O. Box: 116898, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.**  
**Tel: +971-4-3340045 / 3988529 | Fax: +971-4-3340056/ 3980157**

[www.bascertification.com](http://www.bascertification.com)

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## Preparing for the Change – Transition to ISO 14001:2015.

As everyone to be in the world of eminence is aware, the world now has a new version of ISO 14001. ISO standards touch almost everything we do and they help to make the world a safer and more efficient place. This drives the need to evaluate the effectiveness of the standard and make changes to drive continual improvement within our own organizations and industrywide.

### The Change

All ISO management system standards are subject to a regular review under the rules by which they are written. Following a substantial user survey, the committee decided that a review was appropriate and created the following objectives to maintain its relevance in today’s market place and in the future:

- Integrate with other management systems.
- Provide an integrated approach to organizational management.
- Reflect the increasingly complex systems in which organizations operate.
- Enhance an organization’s ability to address their Quality, environmental impacts to the society.

The task of understanding the revised standard’s effect on your organization can be overwhelming. We at BAS want to ease our clients and potential clients into these new standards and have composed this simplified FAQ to address some of the most pressing questions and address what steps can be taken now to prepare for the coming change.

### Transition Milestones

This is currently the most frequently asked questions from our clients. We have developed this to bring you a simplified overview. Before detailing our recommendations, let’s review the facts: The management of BAS is conditionally committed on the following dates:

	ISO 14001:2015
Publication of the official standard	15 September 2015
Transition period start date	15 September 2015
Transition period end date	14 September 2018
Certifications on earlier version (ISO 14001:2004) become no longer valid from	14 September 2018
Cut-off date for the Initial Certification activities on earlier version (ISO 9001:2008 & ISO 14001:2004)	14 March 2017
Cut-off date for the all certification activities on earlier version (ISO 14001:2004)	14 May 2018
Cut-off date for surveillance and recertification on earlier version (ISO 14001:2004)	14 May 2018
Cut-off date for transfer of certificate to 2015 version (from ISO 14001:2004 versions)	14 May 2018



## Training Requirements

- Training of all process owners in ISO14001:2015 standards including documentation.
- Internal auditors need to be trained for conducting internal audits in the newer version of the standards.

## FAQ:

### 1) *Why is the ISO 14001 standard changing again?*

There are a number of objectives associated with this revision, but there are three that are considered most critical. 1) The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) wants to see the ISO 14001 and all of its other standards continue to grow in terms of numbers of registrations. There is a lingering perception that ISO 14001 is somehow overbearing or obtrusive to service organizations. 2) There has been a targeted effort to simplify language used to aid in understanding and promote consistency between accreditation bodies, certification bodies, auditors, and clients. 3) There has been a long standing desire to simplify and streamline the process for companies that wish to achieve multiple certifications (such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001.) For example, many of these companies currently feel compelled to maintain multiple sets of quality and procedures manuals. This new re-write is attempting to address these and other concerns.

ISO 14001 – Environmental Management Systems, the world’s first international environmental standard has been helping thousands of organizations to improve their environmental, sustainability and operational performance since it was first published as BS 7750 in 1992.

To ensure that ISO 14001 continue to serve organizations and maintain its relevance in today’s market place, the standard has been revised. The new standard addresses the change in environmental practices, and ensures that the management system is future proof. Companies, organizations and society have a global responsibility to grow without compromising resources for future generations. ISO 14001 was originally written with the environment in mind and that remains the priority for ISO 14001:2015.

### 2) *What is the expected timeline?*

The new standard was published on September 15, 2015. This means that the ISO 14001:2004 standards will become obsolete on September 14, 2018. As a result, all certifications of these two standards issued in late 2015 and beyond will have to bear an expiry date September 14, 2018. However, it has been emphasized that companies will be allowed to transition at their own pace, and that certification bodies will have to establish their own individual cut-off dates for ISO 14001:2004 audits. BAS has established cut-off plan for ISO 14001:2004 in two tiers. This is explained as a response to the next two questions.

### 3) *Our Certification audits are normally due in late July, and the transition period ends in September. Why can’t we have its transition audit in late July 2018?*

While it is true that the transition period does not end until September 14, 2018, it is not just required that your audit is conducted by this date. If any nonconformities are discovered during the audit, they must be addressed with corrective action, and BAS’s technical review committee (decision-making body) must review and approve the audits by the transition deadline. A late July 2018 audit does not provide enough time for this to happen. Thus, your organization could transition in July 2017 or chose to have an earlier audit in 2018, perhaps May, to



allow adequate time for completion of the post-audit process. All transition audits must be completed within 120 days of the transition end date of September 14, 2018. Thus, all transition audits must be completed by May 14, 2018.

- 4) ***My organization is not yet certified. We have been working at implementing ISO 14001:2004 for a while. Can we still seek certification to the earlier versions of the standard and then transition later?***

BAS appreciates that a lot of work may have gone into preparing for certification to ISO14001:2004. **BAS will allow initial audits to these versions of the standards until eighteen months into the transition period, or approximately March 14, 2017.** Keep in mind that ISO 14001:2004 will be obsolete on September 14, 2018. Therefore, the expiration date on any 2004 certificate issued after the publication of ISO 14001:2015 will be September 14, 2018. Thus, it may appear that your organization is not being granted a full, three-year certificate. However, after successful transition to ISO 14001:2015, the expiry date of your certificate will be amended to reflect a full three-year certification.

- 5) ***What if we have a Recertification audit in early 2016, should we just plan on performing that audit to the earlier version of the standards?***

This will be a strategic decision that each company makes on its own, but there are a few key points to bear in mind. If you have had a chance to examine your quality system against the revised requirements and feel that you are ready, you can certainly request that a transition audit to be performed. Timing the transition to your regular recertification audit is ideal, but not in any way mandatory. You could certainly perform your 2016 Recertification Audit to earlier versions, and then complete a transition audit to ISO 14001:2015 in 2017.

- 6) ***Is it better to transition earlier?***

As described in the question above, it is important to avoid waiting until the last minute. However, there is no difference if you transition in April 2016, April 2017 or April 2018, for example. An ISO 14001:2004 certificate is still valid until the end of the transition period. In no way should an ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 certificates be perceived as better than an ISO 14001:2004 certificates until the obsolescence date of that standard.

- 7) ***What happens if my organization doesn't transition on time?***

If your organization does not have a transition audit prior to the end of the transition period/obsolescence date of ISO 14001:2004 then you will no longer be certified as of the end of the transition period. In order to become certified to ISO14001:2015, you will need to start over with an initial audit (Stage 1 and Stage 2).

If your organization does have its transition audit but the audits are not closed prior to the end of the transition period/obsolescence date of ISO 14001:2004, then an ISO 14001:2015 certificate will be issued as soon as the audits can be closed. This means that there will be a lapse in your certification status. Our admin department will work with you to ensure the timely scheduling of any transition audits that occur later in the transition period to avoid this unfortunate situation.

- 8) ***We've already been certified for a long time and our procedures are well implemented, do we have to change them?***

BAS's analysis has concluded that for the average ISO14001:2004 certified company, the impact of the revised standard will be minimal and quite manageable. It is important to bear in mind that the ISO is seeking greater inclusion for the ISO14001 standard. They want to see it continue to grow into new sectors and be even more user friendly than it is now. Requiring a company to aggressively overhaul their current ISO14001:2004 system is not consistent with this objective.



**9) Will our staff have to complete transition training?**

Yes, you will be expected to provide some form of transition training to your staff. At a minimum, BAS would expect that awareness training of the new standard would be provided, as well as an assessment of the new standard's impact on the various processes and personnel. However, it is entirely conceivable that the majority of your staff will feel no effect from your company's transition to ISO 14001:2015.

**10) What about our internal auditors, will they have to complete transitional training?**

Internal auditing is viewed in the same light as any other required competency within a quality management system. Namely, the organization is responsible for determining what competencies are required for its internal auditors, as well as the methods to be used to achieve those competencies. To put it more plainly, each organization will have to decide on its own the extent to which transition training will be needed. It is conceivable that a seasoned team of internal auditors could complete a period of self-study and successfully transition to auditing ISO 14001:2015. As this has always been the case, the competency of your internal auditors will be judged by the overall effectiveness of your internal audit process.

**11) What steps can we take right now?**

The International Accreditation Forum (IAF) has published an Informative Document, ID 10 which recommends the following steps be taken in the transition to ISO 14001:2015 respectively. 1) A full review of the standards should be performed by Top Management to identify the gaps that need to be addressed. 2) A plan of implementation should be developed with assigned responsibilities. 3) All quality and or environmental management system documents (including the quality and procedures manual (if applicable)) should be updated to reflect any new or revised processes. 4) All necessary awareness and transition training should be completed. 4) A full system internal audit followed by a Management Review should be complete. 5) Corrective Actions for all internal audit findings should be in process or complete. 6) Coordinate with BAS for planning of transition arrangements.

**12) Will extra audit time be needed for my transition audit?**

Yes, if you plan on transitioning on a normal surveillance or recertification audit, extra time will be added to your audit. Guidance published by the International Accreditation Forum clearly states the following: "Where transition audits are carried out in conjunction with scheduled surveillance or recertification (i.e. progressive or staged approach), additional time is likely to be required to ensure that all activities are covered for the existing and new standards."

BAS has completed an analysis of the new requirements and our technical experts have analysed the time it would take to effectively audit these requirements in different companies.

**13) Our organization is considering transferring our accredited ISO 14001:2004 certification to BAS. How does the transition timeline impact our plans to transfer?**

The requirements will be the same whether you are a currently certified BAS client or a transfer candidate. BAS will transfer an ISO 14001:2004 certificate until May 14, 2018. Subsequent to this date, we cannot guarantee that all transition activities will be completed prior to the transition deadline.

These helpful FAQ's will also be available via download on [www.bascertification.com](http://www.bascertification.com). Should you have further questions or require assistance please contact our office.