

**This section concisely describes the essential features of the ISO 14000 family.**

The ISO 14000 family addresses various aspects of environmental management. The very first two standards, [ISO 14001:2004](#) and [ISO 14004:2004](#) deal with environmental management systems (EMS). ISO 14001:2004 provides the **requirements** for an EMS and ISO 14004:2004 gives general EMS **guidelines**.

The other standards and guidelines in the family address specific environmental aspects, including: labeling, performance evaluation, life cycle analysis, communication and auditing.

### An ISO 14001:2004-based EMS

An EMS meeting the requirements of ISO 14001:2004 is a management tool enabling an organization of any size or type to:

- identify and control the **environmental impact** of its activities, products or services, and to
- **improve** its environmental performance continually, and to
- implement a **systematic approach** to setting environmental objectives and targets, to achieving these and to demonstrating that they have been achieved.

### How it works

ISO 14001:2004 does not specify levels of environmental performance. If it specified levels of environmental performance, they would have to be specific to each business activity and this would require a specific EMS standard for each business. That is not the intention.

ISO has many other standards dealing with specific environmental issues. The intention of ISO 14001:2004 is to provide a **framework for a holistic, strategic approach** to the organization's environmental policy, plans and actions.

ISO 14001:2004 gives the **generic requirements** for an environmental management system. The underlying philosophy is that whatever the organization's activity, the requirements of an effective EMS are the same.

This has the effect of establishing a **common reference** for communicating about environmental management issues between organizations and their customers, regulators, the public and other stakeholders.

Because ISO 14001:2004 does not lay down levels of environmental performance, the standard can be implemented by a **wide variety of organizations**, whatever their current level of environmental maturity. However, a **commitment to compliance** with applicable environmental legislation and regulations is required, along with a commitment to **continual improvement** – for which the EMS provides the framework.

## The EMS standards

**ISO 14004:2004** provides **guidelines** on the elements of an environmental management system and its implementation, and discusses principal issues involved.

**ISO 14001:2004** specifies the **requirements** for such an **environmental management system**. Fulfilling these requirements demands objective evidence which can be audited to demonstrate that the environmental management system is operating effectively in conformity to the standard.

## What can be achieved

ISO 14001:2004 is a tool that can be used to meet **internal objectives**:

- **provide assurance to management** that it is in control of the organizational processes and activities having an impact on the environment
- **assure employees** that they are working for an environmentally responsible organization.

ISO 14001:2004 can also be used to meet **external objectives**:

- provide assurance on environmental issues to **external stakeholders** – such as customers, the community and regulatory agencies
- comply with environmental regulations
- support the organization's **claims and communication** about its own environmental policies, plans and actions
- provides a framework for **demonstrating conformity** via suppliers' declarations of conformity, assessment of conformity by an external stakeholder - such as a business client - and for certification of conformity by an independent certification body.