ISO 14001

ISO 14001:2026 — Important Update

Issued 2026

ISO 14001:2026 was officially published in April 2026, replacing ISO 14001:2015. The revision is considered an evolution rather than a complete rewrite, so organizations with a mature Environmental Management System (EMS) should not need major restructuring. The transition period is 36 months, with organizations expected to transition by April / May 2029.

Key changes in ISO 14001:2026

Area	ISO 14001:2015	ISO 14001:2026 Change
Climate change	Added through 2024 amendment	Integrated into the standard with broader environmental context
Biodiversity	Limited reference	Explicit consideration of biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural capital
Environmental conditions	General context	More detailed consideration of pollution, resource availability, climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem health
Planning and managing change	No dedicated requirement	**New Clause 6.3** requiring planned management of changes affecting the EMS
Leadership	General commitment	Stronger emphasis on governance, accountability, and strategic direction
Life-cycle perspective	Introduced in 2015	Clarified and strengthened across products, services, and supply chains
Annex SL alignment	Previous structure	Updated to the latest Harmonized Structure used across ISO management standards

Major new emphasis

1. Biodiversity and natural capital

Organizations are now expected to consider:

- Impacts on biodiversity
- Ecosystem health
- Natural resource availability
- Habitat protection where relevant

This does not mean every organization must create biodiversity objectives. It means they must determine whether biodiversity is relevant to their context and environmental aspects.

2. New Clause 6.3 – Planning and Managing Changes

One of the most significant additions.

Organizations need a documented approach for managing changes such as:

- New equipment
- Process changes
- Facility expansions
- Supplier changes
- Organizational restructuring
- New products or services

The objective is to ensure changes do not negatively affect environmental performance.

3. Stronger strategic context

Organizations must better understand:

- External environmental conditions
- Emerging environmental risks
- Long-term sustainability issues
- Stakeholder expectations

This expands the context analysis beyond legal compliance.

4. Stronger governance

Top management is expected to demonstrate greater involvement by:

- Integrating environmental issues into business strategy
- Supporting continual improvement
- Ensuring adequate resources
- Monitoring environmental performance

5. Improved life cycle thinking

Organizations should more clearly evaluate environmental impacts across:

- Design
- Procurement
- Production
- Distribution

- Use
- End-of-life

Supply chain considerations receive greater emphasis.

What has *not* changed

The following remain essentially the same:

- Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) model
- Risk-based thinking
- Compliance obligations
- Environmental aspects and impacts
- Internal audits
- Management review
- Continual improvement
- Certification process

What organizations should do now

1. Perform a gap analysis against ISO 14001:2026.
2. Update the EMS context to include biodiversity and broader environmental conditions.
3. Develop a formal process for planning and managing organizational changes.
4. Review environmental aspects with a stronger life-cycle perspective.
5. Train leadership, environmental managers, and internal auditors on the revised requirements.
6. Schedule your transition audit during a surveillance or recertification audit before the 2029 deadline.

Overall, the revision is regarded as moderate. Most organizations certified to ISO 14001:2015 can transition by updating existing processes rather than redesigning their EMS from scratch.