2015 REVISION TO ISO 14001

KEY ELEMENTS – REVISION TO ISO14001 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

1. BACKGROUND

All ISO standards are reviewed every five years to establish if a revision is required to keep it relevant and current. One of the main aims of revising the standard is to ensure that the future ISO 14001:2015 is compatible in structure with other management system standards such as ISO 9001; in this respect it will be organised in line with the High Level Structure (HLS) for Management System Standards incorporating identical text, common terms and core definitions.

2. TIMETABLE

ISO 14001 is currently at the Draft International Stage (DIS), the fourth stage of a six stage process, interested parties can submit feedback to the experts on the technical committee that is revising the standard.

The revised ISO 14001 standard is due to be published by the end of 2015.

Organizations are granted a three-year transition period after the revision has been published to migrate their environmental management system to the new edition of the standard. After the transition period, companies with external or third party certification will have to seek certification to the new version of the standard.

3. MAIN CHANGES TO THE STANDARD

Strategic Environmental Management:
- Increased prominence of environmental management within the organization's **strategic planning** processes.
- A new requirement to understand the organization's **context**
- Focus on needs and expectations of interested parties (including regulatory requirements)
- Awareness of local, regional or global environmental conditions that can affect, or be affected by, the organization.
- Adaptation planning - actions to mitigate adverse risk or exploit beneficial opportunities to be integrated into the operational planning of the environmental management system.

Leadership:
- Specific responsibilities for those in leadership roles (i.e. top management) to promote environmental management within the organization.

Protecting the environment:

- Commitment to proactive initiatives to protect the environment from harm and degradation, consistent with the context of the organization. Examples can include prevention of pollution, sustainable resource use, climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, etc.

Environmental performance:

- Shift in emphasis with regard to continual improvement, from improving the management system to **improving environmental performance**.

Lifecycle thinking:

- In addition to the current requirement to manage environmental aspects associated with procured goods and service, organizations will need to extend their control and influence to the environmental impacts associated with **product use** and **end-of-life** treatment or disposal. This does not imply a requirement to do a life cycle assessment.

Communication:

- Development of a communications strategy for both **external and internal** communication
- Requirement to communicate consistent and reliable information, and establish mechanisms for persons working under the organization's control to make suggestions on improving the environmental management system.
- Decision to communicate externally is retained but the decision needs to take into account information reporting required by regulatory agencies and the expectations of interested parties.

Documentation:

- Reflects the evolution of computer and cloud based systems for running management systems, the revision incorporates the term 'documented information', instead of 'documents' and 'records'.