

ISO 14001:2026 – Key Changes and Transition Guidance

Understand what's changing in the world's leading environmental management system (EMS) standard, and how to keep your certification on track.

What is ISO 14001:2026?

ISO 14001:2026 is the latest revision of the ISO 14001 standard for environmental management systems. It builds on ISO 14001:2015, retaining the Annex SL / Harmonized Structure so your existing EMS framework remains the foundation, while sharpening requirements around climate change, natural resource use, biodiversity, and lifecycle thinking.

The intent behind this revision has been deliberately measured: clarify and strengthen existing requirements rather than introduce a wave of new ones. Many organizations already touch on these themes informally; ISO 14001:2026 asks you to formalize and document them more clearly.

As an accredited certification body, URS is preparing our clients and auditors now, so your EMS transition is planned, not rushed.

ISO 14001 transition timeline

Milestone	Date
Current standard in force	ISO 14001:2015 (including the 2024 climate change amendment)
ISO 14001:2026 published	Published April 2026
Transition audits begin	Expected from late 2026, subject to UKAS/EIAC accreditation updates
Transition deadline	30 April 2029

Our recommendation: organizations with a well-established EMS should treat this as a refinement exercise, not a rebuild, but the earlier you start your gap assessment, the more control you have over timing and cost.

What's changing: key areas of focus

Context of the Organization (Clauses 4.1 & 4.2)

The 2024 climate change amendment is now formally built into the standard. Beyond climate, organizations must also explicitly consider other environmental conditions, such as natural resource availability, pollution levels, and biodiversity, when analyzing context. **Your**

action: Broaden your context analysis beyond climate alone to cover the full set of environmental conditions relevant to your operations.

Risks and Opportunities (Clause 6.1)

The clause has been restructured for clarity, with a new dedicated subclause on risks and opportunities and updated requirements for planning actions, including how emergency situations with environmental impact are addressed. **Your action:** Review how your EMS identifies, documents, and plans for environmental risks, opportunities, and emergency scenarios.

Life Cycle Perspective (Clause 6.1 / 8.1)

Greater emphasis on considering environmental aspects across the full life cycle, from sourcing and supply chain through to end-of-life, not just your direct operations. **Your action:** Extend your environmental aspects register and supplier/control processes to reflect upstream and downstream impacts.

Operational Planning and Control (Clause 8.1)

The scope of control expands from "outsourced processes" to "externally provided processes, products and services", a broader lens on your supply chain's environmental performance. **Your action:** Reassess how you control and monitor externally provided products, processes, and services.

Leadership and Accountability (Clause 5)

Stronger expectation that top management visibly drives environmental performance and integrates it into business strategy, not just policy statements. **Your action:** Review how leadership commitment to environmental objectives is demonstrated and documented.

Improvement (Clause 10)

Consolidation and renumbering of clauses, with content that stays largely consistent with 2015. **Your action:** Update internal document references to reflect the revised clause structure.

Annex A Guidance

Substantially revised and expanded across most clauses to support clearer interpretation of requirements. **Your action:** Use the updated Annex A guidance as a reference point during your gap assessment, it clarifies intent far more than the 2015 version did.

Your ISO 14001:2026 transition checklist

- Obtain and review the official ISO 14001:2026 standard

- Carry out a gap analysis against your current EMS
- Broaden context analysis to include climate, resource use, pollution, and biodiversity
- Extend environmental aspects and impacts across the full life cycle and supply chain
- Review and formalize how risks, opportunities, and emergency situations are managed
- Establish or strengthen a structured change-management process for your EMS
- Update leadership engagement and internal awareness training
- Build a transition plan aligned with your certification cycle

Why this matters, even with moderate changes

- Strengthens your EMS against growing regulatory and stakeholder scrutiny on climate and resource use
- Extends environmental accountability across your supply chain, an increasing expectation from customers and investors
- Formalizes practices many organizations already do informally, reducing future audit risk
- Protects certification continuity ahead of the transition deadline

How URS supports your transition

- **Gap assessments** against ISO 14001:2026 requirements
- **Transition training** covering the revised clauses and Annex A guidance
- **Certification audits** aligned to the new requirements and timed to your existing cycle
- **Integrated Management System (IMS) support** if you also hold ISO 9001, ISO 45001, or other certifications