Iso 14001 Encyclopedia Article

Iso 14001

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One of the more successful outcomes of the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 was the initiation of a process that would lead to the creation of an international environmental management standard. At the conclusion of the summit, the organizing committee asked the International Organization for Standardization (IOS) to evaluate the feasibility of developing such a standard in order to create some consistency in regulation among and dis-courage pollution by foreign interests in the many countries that were each developing their own set of environmental rules and laws. The IOS agreed and in August 1996 published the ISO 14001 Environmental Management Standard, the first in a series of standards to help organizations systematically improve their environmental performance. ISO 14001 is not, however, a performance standard. Rather, it specifically lists the elements and processes that need to be in place and fully operational within an organization to ensure that it is capable of achieving the level of environmental performance deemed appropriate to the nature, scale, and environmental impacts of its activities, products, and services.

ISO 14001 follows the "plan, do, check, act" strategy inherent in modern quality-management systems. The three basic tenets of the standard involve these commitments: compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations; prevention of pollution; and continual improvement. Conformance with the ISO 14001 standard is a voluntary measure that has been widely adopted in the European Union (EU) and to a lesser degree in the United States as a prerequisite to doing business. Thus, although voluntary, it has become an economic necessity, and unlike government initiatives, it is driven by concerns of commerce rather than regulatory mandates.

Bibliography

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Internet Resource

International Organization for Standardization Web site. Available from http://www.iso.org/iso/en/ISOOnline.fro ntpage.