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Environmental management — Environmental assessment of sites and organizations (EASO)

Management environnemental — Évaluation environnementale de sites et d'organismes (EESO)

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 3.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this International Standard may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 14015 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Environmental auditing and related environmental investigations*.

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Introduction

Organizations are increasingly interested in understanding the environmental issues associated with their sites and activities or those of potential acquisitions. These issues and their associated business consequences can be appraised by means of an Environmental Assessment of the Site and Organization (EASO). Such an assessment may be carried out during operations or at the time of acquisition or divestiture of assets and may be conducted as part of a broader business assessment process often referred to as "due diligence".

This International Standard gives guidance on how to conduct an EASO. It provides the basis for harmonization of the terminology used and for a structured, consistent, transparent and objective approach to conducting such environmental assessments. It can be used by all organizations, including small- and medium-sized enterprises, operating anywhere in the world. This International Standard is flexible in its application and may be used for self-assessments as well as external assessments, with or without the need to employ third parties. The users of this International Standard are expected to be industry, past, present and possible future users of particular sites, and organizations with a financial interest in the industry or site (e.g. banks, insurance companies, investors and site owners). This International Standard is likely to be used in connection with the transfer of responsibilities and obligations.

The information used during an EASO may be derived from sources that include environmental management system audits, regulatory compliance audits, environmental impact assessments, environmental performance evaluations or site investigations. Some of these assessments or investigations may have been conducted using other relevant ISO standards (e.g. ISO 14001, ISO 14011 or ISO 14031).

Through the process of evaluating both existing and newly acquired information, an EASO seeks to draw conclusions relating to business consequences associated with environmental aspects and issues.

Conclusions in an EASO should be based on objective information. In the absence of validated information, an EASO assessor may be required to exercise professional judgement in evaluating the available environmental information and drawing conclusions.

This International Standard does not provide guidance on intrusive investigations or site remediation. However, if requested by the client, these may be undertaken in accordance with other standards or procedures.

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Environmental management — Environmental assessment of sites and organizations (EASO)

1   Scope

This International Standard provides guidance on how to conduct an EASO through a systematic process of identifying environmental aspects and environmental issues and determining, if appropriate, their business consequences.

This International Standard covers the roles and responsibilities of the parties to the assessment (the client, the assessor and the representative of the assessee), and the stages of the assessment process (planning, information gathering and validation, evaluation and reporting). The process for conducting an EASO is shown in Figure 1.

This International Standard does not provide guidance on how to conduct other types of environmental assessment, such as:
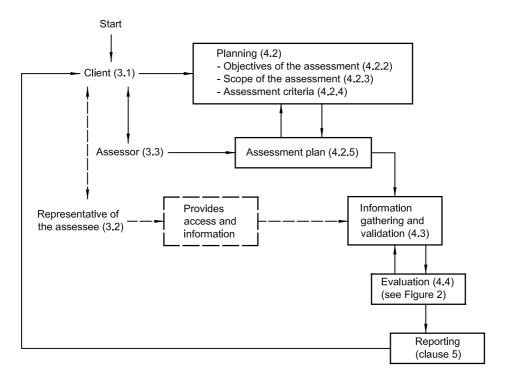
a)   initial environmental reviews;

b)   environmental audits (including environmental management system and regulatory compliance audits);

c)   environmental impact assessments; or

d)   environmental performance evaluations.

Intrusive investigations and site remediation, as well as the decision to proceed with them, are outside the scope of this International Standard.

This International Standard is not intended for use as a specification standard for certification or registration purposes or for the establishment of environmental management system requirements.

Use of this International Standard does not imply that other standards and legislation are imposed on the client or the assessee.

NOTE   The numbers between brackets refer to (sub)clauses in this International Standard. The dashed lines indicate that the assessee is not necessarily involved in an EASO as described in this International Standard (see note to 3.2)

Figure 1 — Process for conducting an Environmental Assessment of Sites and Organizations

2   Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this International Standard the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1
assessee
site or organization being assessed

2.2
assessor
person, possessing sufficient competence, designated to conduct or participate in a given assessment

NOTE   An assessor may be internal or external to the organization subject to the assessment. More than one assessor may be required to ensure adequate coverage of all relevant matters, for example when there is a need for specific expertise.

2.3
business consequence
actual or potential impact (financial or other; positive or negative; qualitative or quantitative) of the identified and evaluated environmental issues

2.4
client
organization commissioning the assessment

EXAMPLES   The site owner, the assessee, or any other party.

2.5
environment
surroundings in which an organization operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans, and their interrelation

NOTE   Surroundings in this context extend from within an organization to the global system.

[ISO 14001:1996]

2.6
environmental aspect
element of an organization's activities, products or services that can interact with the environment

NOTE   An environmental aspect can relate to past, present and future activities, products and services.

2.7
environmental assessment of sites and organizations
EASO
process to identify objectively the environmental aspects, to identify the environmental issues and to determine the business consequences of sites and organizations as a result of past, current and expected future activities

NOTE   The determination of business consequences is optional, at the discretion of the client.

2.8
environmental impact
any change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from an organization's activities, products or services

[ISO 14001:1996]

2.9
environmental issue
issue for which validated information on environmental aspects deviates from selected criteria and may result in liabilities or benefits, effects on the assessee's or the client's public image, or other costs

2.10
environmental management system
that part of the overall management system that includes organizational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing and maintaining the environmental policy

[ISO 14001:1996]

2.11
intrusive investigation
sampling and testing using instruments and/or requiring physical interference

2.12
organization
company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private, that has its own functions and administration

NOTE   In organizations with more than one operative unit, each operative unit can be defined as an organization.

2.13
representative of the assessee
person authorized to represent the assessee

2.14
site
location with defined geographical boundaries and on which activities under the control of an organization may be carried out

NOTE   The geographical boundaries may be on land and in water, and include above- and below-surface structures, both natural and man-made.

2.15
validation
process whereby the assessor determines that the information gathered is accurate, reliable, sufficient and appropriate to meet the objectives of the assessment

3   Roles and responsibilities

3.1   Client

Client responsibilities and activities should include

a)   determining the need for the assessment,

b)   defining the objectives of the assessment,

c)   determining the scope and criteria of the assessment, if appropriate in consultation with the assessor,

d)   selecting the assessor(s),

e)   providing instructions to the assessor(s),

f)   defining which parts of the assessment (planning, information gathering and validation, evaluation and reporting) will be conducted by the assessor and which parts will be the responsibility of the client; this may require identification of and coordination with other experts,

g)   identifying and determining priority assessment areas, if appropriate,

h)   contacting the representative of the assessee, if appropriate, to obtain full cooperation and to initiate the process,

i)   approving the assessment plan,

j)   providing appropriate authority and resources to enable the assessment to be conducted,

k)   providing the assessor with the information necessary to undertake the assessment, and

l)   receiving the assessment results and determining their distribution.

Before any disclosure of the results of the assessment to a third party, the client should decide whether to inform the representative of the assessee.

NOTE   The client, assessor and representative of the assessee may be the same body.

3.2   Representative of the assessee

The roles and responsibilities of the representative of the assessee should include

a)   providing access to relevant areas and information to meet the objectives of the assessment,

b)   informing relevant employees and other parties about the assessment process,

c)   providing, or assisting to provide, personnel for interviews,

d)   providing personnel to assist in the assessment process, if requested, and

e)   providing a safe working environment for the assessor.

At the discretion of the client, the representative of the assessee may participate in the determination of the scope and the assessment plan and may receive the results of the assessment.

The role of the representative of the assessee does not apply if the assessment is undertaken without the knowledge of the assessee, or if the site and/or organization is one for which no responsible party can be identified.

3.3   Assessor

The roles and responsibilities of an assessor are in some respects different from those of an auditor. Whereas an auditor verifies existing information against established criteria, an assessor in addition gathers new information and is often required to evaluate information to determine business consequences.

In the conduct of an environmental assessment of sites and organizations, an assessor should use the diligence, knowledge, skill and judgement expected of any assessor in similar circumstances. An assessor should exercise discretion and maintain confidentiality unless required by laws or regulations to do otherwise.

The responsibility and activities of the assessor, or the team leader when more than one assessor is involved, should include

a)   assisting the client, when requested, to determine the objectives, scope (including the identification and determination of priority assessment areas) and criteria of the assessment,

b)   agreeing with the client on the method and format for reporting,

c)   preparing the assessment plan and obtaining the client's approval and, if appropriate, that of the representative of the assessee,

d)   creating and maintaining working documents such as checklists and protocols,

e)   ensuring that the necessary skills are available to meet the assessment objectives and, if appropriate, assembling an assessment team,

f)   obtaining the client's approval of the assessment team,

g)   obtaining initial information,

h)   assigning members of the assessment team to conduct the component parts of the assessment,

i)   gathering and validating information in accordance with the assessment plan,

j)   identifying and evaluating environmental issues,

k)   determining business consequences, if requested by the client, and

l)   preparing and providing the report to the client, if requested.

This International Standard does not give guidance on assessor competence and qualifications. However, the performance of an environmental assessment requires sufficient

—   education,