
**Environmental management —
Environmental communication —
Guidelines and examples**

*Management environnemental — Communication environnementale
— Lignes directrices et exemples*

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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.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Environmental performance evaluation*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/SS S26, *Environmental management*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 14063:2006), which has been technically revised. The main changes compared with the previous edition are as follows:

- the definition for environmental communication objective (3.7) has been changed to be harmonized with definition of objective in ISO 14001:2015;
- references to social media have been included;
- [Table A.1](#) has been updated to reflect revised standards.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

In today's global economy, communication on environmental values, actions and performance has become an essential activity of organizations due to both increased public concern and interest, and governmental activities related to the environment. Organizations all over the world are increasingly confronted with the need to provide information to support policy positions and actions, and present and explain the environmental implications of their activities, products and services. There is also a growing need to listen to interested parties, and incorporate their views and requirements as part of environmental communication.

Organizations have a need to obtain and provide information about and respond to environmental issues, concerns and programmes. Furthermore, with the general availability of devices such as smart phones and tablets, communication is almost instantaneous, requiring the organization to be able to respond to any issue or information request in a timely manner. Information to be communicated is influenced by factors such as the organization's geographic location and distribution, size and types of activities. Motivations for communication include the following:

- the interest of the organization to share information on its environmental practices;
- a request for information by employees or investors, a government agency, a community group, a customer or supplier, or any other interested party;
- the need to discuss with interested parties, especially with target groups, a proposed action of the organization, such as expansion of an existing facility, or siting of a new facility, or the introduction of a new product or service;
- environmental risk management;
- compliance obligation requirements;
- response to suggestions (negative or positive) from interested parties;
- response to false and/or malicious accusations of environmental impropriety by parties intending to disparage the organization to promote their agendas;
- the increasing importance of addressing environmental issues.

Environmental communication is the process of sharing information to build trust, credibility and partnerships, to raise awareness, and to use in decision-making. The processes used and the content of environmental communication will vary with the objectives and circumstances of the organization and can be built on substantive information.

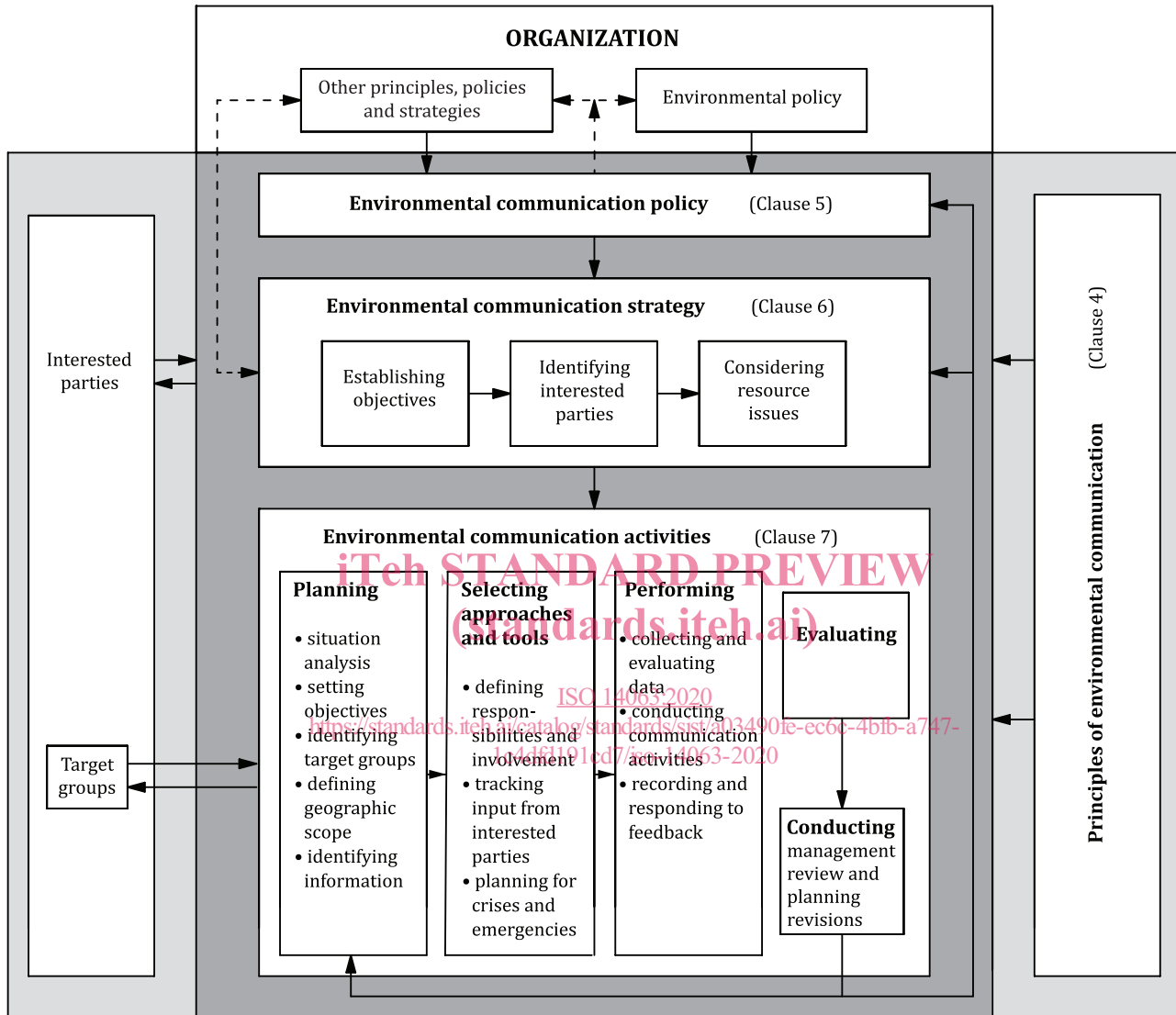
Environmental communication is broader than environmental reporting. It has many purposes and takes many forms. Environmental communication can be ad hoc or planned. An example of ad hoc communication occurs when a facility manager attends a community event and answers questions. Planned communication can cover a range from limited to full participation of interested parties, as follows.

- a) One-way communication occurs when the organization distributes information, for example, when an organization issues an environmental report with no opportunity for questions or discussion.
- b) Two-way communication occurs with an exchange of information and ideas among the organization and interested parties.
- c) In participatory decision-making, including effective feedback that affects the organization and/or the local community, an organization collaborates with interested parties.

Engagement with interested parties provides an opportunity for an organization to learn their issues and concerns. It can lead to knowledge being gained by both sides and can influence opinions and perceptions. When properly done, any particular approach can be successful and satisfy the needs of the organization and interested parties. Understanding the communication pattern/behaviour of

each interested party (or target group) can be important in environmental communications. The most effective environmental communication process involves ongoing contact by the organization with internal and external interested parties, as part of the organization’s overall communications strategy.

Figure 1 shows the interrelationships and flow of environmental communication.



NOTE 1 Titles in bold and numbered refer to the clauses in this document.

NOTE 2 Dotted line arrows indicate the environmental communication system relationship with other elements of the organization. Full arrows indicate the interrelationship within the environmental communication system.

NOTE 3 Shading indicates the scope of the environmental communication system. Darker shading indicates the overlap of the environmental communication system with the organization.

Figure 1 — Environmental communication

Environmental communication often results in many benefits, such as:

- assisting interested parties in understanding an organization’s environmental commitments, policies and performance;
- providing inputs/suggestions for improving the environmental performance of an organization’s activities, products and services, and progress toward sustainability;

- improving understanding of interested parties' needs and concerns to foster trust and dialogue;
- promoting an organization's environmental credentials, achievements and performance;
- raising the importance and level of environmental awareness to support an environmentally responsible culture and values within the organization;
- addressing interested parties' concerns and complaints about operational and emergency environmental hazards;
- enhancing interested parties' perceptions of the organization;
- increasing business support and shareholder confidence.

Environmental communication is one of the crucial issues to be dealt with by any organization, with or without an environmental management system in place. Environmental communication is more than a question of organization and management, it relates to the organization's values as well. To ensure successful communication processes, it is important for the organization to consider itself a responsible partner within society and to address the environmental expectations of interested parties.

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Environmental management — Environmental communication — Guidelines and examples

1 Scope

This document gives guidelines to organizations for general principles, policy, strategy and activities relating to both internal and external environmental communication. It uses proven and well-established approaches for communication, adapted to the specific conditions that exist in environmental communication.

It is applicable to all organizations regardless of their size, type, location, structure, activities, products and services, and whether or not they have an environmental management system in place.

It can be used in combination with any of the ISO 14000 family of standards, or on its own.

NOTE 1 A reference table to the ISO 14000 family is provided in [Annex A](#).

NOTE 2 ISO 14020, ISO 14021, ISO 14024, ISO 14025 and ISO 14026 provide specific environmental communication tools and guidance relating to product labels and declarations.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

environmental communication

process that an *organization* (3.4) conducts to provide and obtain information, and to engage in dialogue with internal and external *interested parties* (3.5) to encourage a shared understanding on environmental issues, aspects and performance

3.2

environmental communication policy

overall intentions and directions of an *organization* (3.4) related to its *environmental communication* (3.1) as formally expressed by top management

Note 1 to entry: The environmental communication policy can be a separate policy or part of other policies within the organization.

3.3

environmental communication strategy

organization's (3.4) framework for implementing its *environmental communication policy* (3.2) and for the setting of *environmental communication objectives* (3.7)

3.4 organization

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

[SOURCE: ISO 14001:2015, 3.1.4]

3.5 interested party

person or *organization* (3.4) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

EXAMPLE Customers, communities, suppliers, regulators, non-governmental organizations, investors and employees.

Note 1 to entry: To “perceive itself to be affected” means the perception has been made known to the organization.

Note 2 to entry: Interested parties may be at the local, regional or international level.

[SOURCE: ISO 14001:2015, 3.1.6, modified — Note 2 to entry has been added.]

3.6 target group

interested party or parties (3.5) selected as the focus of an *organization's* (3.4) *environmental communication* (3.1) activity

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3.7 environmental communication objective

result, consistent with the *environmental communication policy* (3.2), that an *organization* (3.4) sets itself to achieve as part of its environmental strategy

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Note 1 to entry: The term “environmental communication target” used in the previous edition of this document is not used in this new edition, to be harmonized with ISO 14015:2001 where “target” is not used. The organization can, however, still use two levels of objectives as described in 7.1.3, Practical help box 7.

3.8 social media

online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other, transforming traditional one-to-many interactions into many-to-many interactions

[SOURCE: ISO 20252:2019, 3.95]

4 Principles of environmental communication

4.1 General

These principles of environmental communication are for organizations to apply, taking into account the identification of interested parties and their needs and expectations.

4.2 Principles

4.2.1 Transparency

The processes, procedures, methods, data sources and assumptions used in environmental communication are available to all interested parties, taking account of the confidentiality of information as required. Interested parties are informed of their role in environmental communication.

4.2.2 Appropriateness

The information provided in environmental communication is relevant to interested parties, using formats, language and media that meet their interests and needs, enabling them to participate fully. The communication takes into account diversity, inclusion and gender of the interested parties.

4.2.3 Credibility

Environmental communication is conducted in an honest and fair manner. Information is provided that is truthful, accurate, substantive and not misleading to interested parties. Information and data are developed using recognized and reproducible methods and indicators.

Environmental communication is open to the needs of interested parties. Queries and concerns of interested parties are responded to in a full and timely manner. Interested parties are aware of how their queries and concerns have been addressed.

Given that the use of social media provides instantaneous communication, the speed in which queries are posted and responded to is controlled.

4.2.4 Clarity

Environmental communication approaches and language are understandable to interested parties to minimize ambiguity.

4.2.5 Regionality

Environmental communication takes into consideration the local or regional environmental context relevant to the area where the corresponding environmental impact occurs.

See ISO 14026:2017, 5.5.

5 Environmental communication policy

5.1 Management commitment

The organization's top management should set, express its commitment to, and promote the environmental communication policy. The policy should be consistent with the principles in [Clause 4](#) and should clearly state the following:

- a) commitment to engage in dialogue with interested parties;
- b) commitment to disclose information about the organization's environmental performance;
- c) significance of internal and external environmental communication in the organization;
- d) commitment to implement the policy and provide the necessary resources;
- e) commitment to address key environmental issues.

The environmental communication policy may form part of, or be integrated into, an organization's communication policy or environmental policy, or may be a separate policy.

5.2 Developing the policy

In developing the policy, those responsible for environmental management within the organization should interact and engage with those responsible for communication to ensure that the policy is coherent and consistent with other principles, policies and the values of the organization. Subsequently, all levels of management should implement the policy and provide input for the formulation and modification of the policy.

An environmental communication policy does not need to be detailed but should convey to interested parties the importance that the organization places on communication about environmental issues, environmental aspects and their associated impacts, and environmental performance. An organization's vision, mission, values and culture can play a fundamental role in developing an environmental communication policy. The organization should make a commitment in the policy to reflect local, regional and/or national cultural characteristics in its environmental communication activities, where applicable.

Important factors that should be considered when developing an environmental communication policy include:

- the organization's business sector and its product or service portfolio;
- its size;
- its organizational infrastructure;
- its corporate governance;
- its market and brand strategies;
- the existence of an environmental management system;
- consideration of environmental aspects and impacts, including those in the supply chain, use and end of life stages of products;
- interaction with related aspects, such as health and safety and other sustainability approaches;
- legal requirements regarding the disclosure of environmental information;
- local, regional, national and international voluntary codes of ethics/conduct;
- the expectations of interested parties;
- the public's "right to know".

The policy should be communicated to interested parties, both internal and external, as appropriate.

6 Environmental communication strategy

6.1 General considerations

The organization's management should develop a strategy to implement its environmental communication policy. The strategy can include environmental communication objectives, identification of interested parties, an indication of when and what it plans to communicate, and a management commitment to allocate adequate resources. An organization should clarify what is possible, taking into account its resources so that it can best and most realistically meet the expectations of interested parties.

Consideration should be given to the fact that environmental communication is part of the organization's environmental activities in general and can be aligned with other elements of management systems, policies, strategies or relevant activities.

Practical help box 1 — Developing the environmental communication strategy

When developing the environmental communication strategy, the questions below can be helpful.

- Why is the organization engaging in environmental communication and what are its purposes?
- What are the organization's key environmental issues and impacts?
- What are the main issues to be covered, messages to be conveyed, and communication techniques, approaches, tools and channels to be used?
- What are the environmental conditions relevant to the organization, its products and its context?
- What are the risks/opportunities generated by the communication to be taken into account in the strategy?
- How much time is needed to implement the strategy?
- How will the strategy involve and coordinate the environmental managers, interested parties, individual(s) responsible for environmental issues and individual(s) who are responsible for the organization's internal and external communication?
- What are the local, regional, national and international boundaries for the strategy?

Once defined, the strategy should be approved by top management and then used as the basis for the organization's environmental communications activities.

6.2 Integrating environmental communication into the organization's general communication process

For efficient environmental communication, it is important to consider the organization's general communication process.

Practical help box 2

When developing the process for environmental communication the organization should consider the following questions.

- What means of communication are already implemented? Can they be used for environmental communication as well?
- Which functions or persons are already assigned with communication responsibilities? Can they also take responsibilities for communicating environmental issues?
- Which interested parties have been identified for other reasons than interest in environmental performance or environmental issues? Can environmental communication be coordinated with other communication for these interested parties?
- Do communication plans exist? How can environmental communication be included in the existing plans?
- What kind of information is already publicly available? Can environmental information be included there? Or, can separate communication channels be more appropriate?
- How and when are objectives for communication established? How can setting environmental communication objectives be an integrated part in that process.