Summary

communication based on ISO 14001

We at SCCM are convinced - and our experience has proven - that any organization, large or small, will achieve better environmental performance by using the 'plan-do-check-act' approach outlined in the ISO 14001 standard.

Summary

Would you like to know more about communicating about your company's environmental management system? What exactly do the ISO 14001 standard and SCCM say about communication and the instruments to use? This document explains all you need to know; we have adapted the requirements in the ISO 14001 standard into concrete tasks, some of which are up to you. The ultimate goal is getting the most out of your environmental management system. The more enthusiastically your own employees use the environmental management system and the better your organization performs as a result, and the better the communication about it, the greater value your ISO 14001-certificate will have – for the government, consumers, financial institutions and NGOs, with as a consequence, increased confidence from all these parties.
Thus, communicating about your policy is useful and profitable as well.

Internal communication plays an important role in:

› gathering and identifying ideas for improving environmental performance;
› transmitting the organization's environmental policy and vision to its employees;
› making individual employees aware of the implications of the environmental management system for their jobs;
› generating motivation and enthusiasm among employees for performing their assigned tasks.

External communication plays an important role in:

› gathering and identifying opportunities for reducing pollution throughout the chain (including suppliers);
› gathering and identifying important environmental aspects for parties such as government and your neighbours;
› setting the right priorities in developing and adapting environmental policy;
› making the public aware of the organization's choices in the field of environment;
› determining the need to apply for or modify licences, or report about compliance;
› publicizing environmental achievements;
› creating awareness of emergency response procedures;
› receiving and handling complaints.

By 'Including' people from your surroundings in the process of getting the ISO 14001-certificate, you can increase the certificate's value later on.

Although disclosing information is mostly your choice (according to article 4.4.3), the ISO 14001 standard requires some communication …

Examples of required information disclosure/communication:

› When applying for a licence;
› Reporting incidents/exceedances of standards;
› Reporting changes in activities or the organization (either negative or positive effect on the environment), at the very least the legally required reports;
› Reporting emissions;
› Performing research;
› Internal emergency response plan;
› Handling complaints submitted to authorities about the organization.

In addition to these 'minimum' communications, the Committee of Experts also expects an ISO 14001-certified organization to communicate with the relevant authorities:
› Before certification of its environmental management system. This gives the authorities involved the opportunity to outline main points for attention in advance, for example using the sample letter in annex 1 of the ISO 14001 certification system;
› When preparing decisions with significant potential implications for environmental objectives and targets;
› When drawing up and/or modifying procedures regarding communication with the competent authority.

This document discusses the articles from ISO 14001 about internal and external communication in separate chapters. Communication with the authorities and communication during the set-up and implementation of the environmental management system each have their own chapter. Chapters are concluded with diagrams showing the first steps to giving concrete form to your communications and communication plan, so that you can more easily choose the communication that fits your organization: who you want to communicate with, about what, why, how, with what intensity and who is responsible.

Introduction: Your level of ambition, vision, opportunities for and intensity of communication
Chapter 1: Explanation of internal communication points in ISO 14001.
Where do I go from here? Choosing internal communication objectives and linking them to communication instruments.
Chapter 2: When do you also opt for external communication about environmental aspects?
Chapter 3: When you answer 'yes': external communication based on the articles in the ISO 14001 standard.
Explanation of external communication points for each external target group.
Chapter 4: When is external communication about environmental aspects required/expected?
Chapter 5: How do I handle required external communication with the authorities?
(Going along on audits, environmental annual report etc)
Chapter 6: Last but not least: internal and external communication during set-up of the environmental management system.