

<https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/archive/pdf/en/environmental-labelling.pdf>



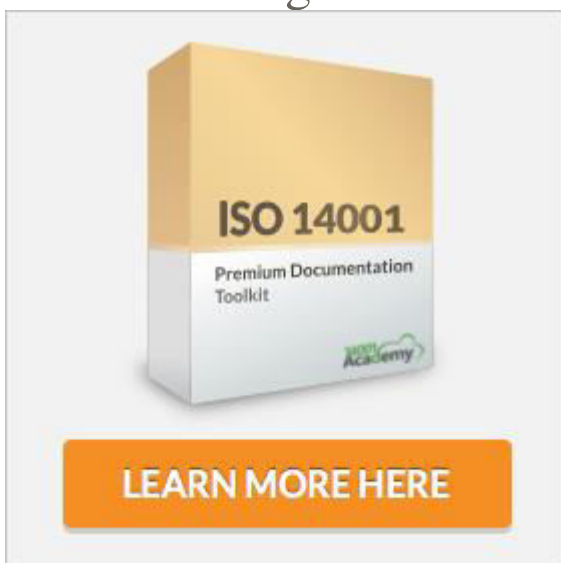
## How can ISO 14001 make the plating industry more environmentally friendly?

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Many industries are using the requirements of [ISO 14001:2015](#) to create an Environmental Management System (EMS) in an effort to better control their environmental performance and reduce their environmental impact. But, can the plating industry use this tool to become more environmentally friendly, since chemical usage, transportation, and disposal are already heavily controlled through environmental legislation in many parts of the world?

Even if you are following all of the laws for your industry, implementing an EMS can help you to find ways to reduce your environmental impact and improve your environmental performance. There are several elements of the [ISO 14001:2015](#) standard that will help the plating industry do this; below are some ideas on how this can be done.

### Understanding environmental aspects and impacts



One of the most important requirements of the ISO 14001 standard, even in previous versions, is the requirement to identify all of the ways that your processes, products, and services interact with the

environment; these are called “environmental aspects.” For instance, the plating industry has specific [environmental aspects](#) that deal with spills and waste management associated with the chemicals used, as well as common aspects like energy usage from machinery.

Once you have identified these aspects, you can then determine how they impact the environment, and thus determine those that could potentially cause the most significant environmental impact. Called “significant environmental aspects,” these need more control than others.

This process is the first place that the plating industry can turn to better understand what needs to be controlled within their processes. There are many environmentally hazardous chemicals used in the plating industry, but understanding which chemicals your organization uses that are the most important to control is critical to becoming more environmentally friendly as a company.

For instance, even though the environmental risks of chemicals in the plating industry are often first to mind, remember that there are other aspects of environmental performance that can be improved, such as energy reduction or reduction in materials usage in the office environment.

For a better understanding of environmental aspects, look into these articles on [What makes an environmental aspect significant in ISO 14001?](#) and [Understanding relationship between environmental aspects and operational procedures.](#)

## Understanding compliance obligations

The second important requirement from ISO 14001 is understanding the environmental compliance obligations for the company. In the plating industry the proper transportation, handling, and disposal of chemicals is readily understood; but, are there other environmental laws and regulations that your company should be following? These laws vary greatly around the globe, but many countries have laws on waste reduction for companies or even energy reduction goals.

Another [compliance](#) obligation above the standard chemical transportation and disposal laws to consider is: Should you have a recycling program for your company to divert materials away from the landfill, or can you reduce your environmental impact by creating a company composting program within the laws of your community?

Understanding all of your compliance obligations can help with achieving your minimum environmental protection level in environmental performance.

## Understanding risks & opportunities in the EMS

A new addition to the ISO 14001:2015 version of the standard is the concept of assessing the risks and opportunities that exist within the environmental aspects, compliance obligations, and other issues. By assessing these risks and opportunities you can identify actions that can be taken to capitalize on them to prevent undesired effects and gain continual improvement. For example:

- Is there a risk that a chemical you use is becoming obsolete and needs to be replaced? By investigating now, can you find a replacement chemical that is less environmentally hazardous than one that is currently available to replace your soon-to-be-obsolete chemical?
- Could you have a risk that older machinery is using more power than a more energy-efficient replacement would? Could you reduce your power usage, as well as save some money on energy, by replacing this old equipment?
- Is there an opportunity that a newly developed chemical is more environmentally friendly than one you use and can replace the hazardous chemical already in use, but still do the same job? Can you capitalize on this opportunity to improve your environmental performance?
- Is there an opportunity that you could reduce raw material usage by improvements in your production process or procedure? Reduced raw material usage could not only help environmentally, but also reduce costs.

Taking actions early on your risks and opportunities can help you to gain benefits in environmental protection before a problem occurs.

For more on the difference between risk & opportunities and environmental aspects, see this blog post on [ISO 14001 risks and opportunities vs. environmental aspects](#).

## Planning for aspects, compliance, and risks & opportunities

The ISO 14001:2015 standard has requirements to plan actions to address the significant environmental aspects, compliance obligations, and risks & opportunities so that you can find a way to integrate these actions into your business processes. It is by doing this that you can find the greatest benefit for implementing an Environmental Management System, because then what you are doing to improve your environmental performance becomes part of your standard work rather than being an add-on activity—bringing the biggest benefit with the least cost.

For more on how ISO 14001 can benefit you, see the article [6 Key Benefits of ISO 14001 Implementation](#).

If you are looking to do more than just follow the rules for chemical handling in the plating industry, and want to find ways to improve your environmental impact, all of these advantages are just some of the ways that the ISO 14001:2015 standard requirements can help. By bringing part of your standard business practice focus on the environment, you will be able to reduce your negative impact on the environment while gaining benefits for your company through process improvements, efficient waste management, and lower energy bills by reducing energy consumption. Use the EMS to be good for both your company and the environment it operates in.

*For a better understanding of the ISO 14001:2015 requirements and how they can make your company more environmentally friendly, check out this free online [ISO 14001:2015 Foundations Course](#).*