

Part VII

Conclusion

21 The Future

21.1 ISO HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS

In early 1995, even before the final draft of ISO 14001 had been printed and issued, inquiries began to circulate concerning the possible need for a corresponding international health and safety standard. At first glance this seems to make a lot of sense and the implementation of such a standard could be done very easily with an environmental management system already in place. Many companies realize that a single management standard to deal with quality, environmental and health and safety would be both cost effective and much more efficient.

In 1994, the British Standards Institute (BSI) developed BS 8750, *Guide to Occupational Health and Safety Management*, which is expected to be a potential precursor to any ISO Health and Safety Standards. One of the unique features of the standard is that it also provides guidance on integrating occupational health and safety management systems into a company's overall management system.

Surveys, however, have indicated that there is little support for the development of health and safety standards. Many of the industrialized nations feel that they have substantial regulations in place and do not want to be burdened with yet another international standard.

21.2 RIO +5

In June 1997, five years after the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, a follow-up summit was held to evaluate the progress of the Agenda 21 initiatives. The Rio +5 summit brought together participants from several sectors, agencies and societies with the intent to answer some of the following questions:

- Assess the progress of Sustainable Development in terms of financial requirements and other economic systems.
- Share the best Sustainable Development practices.
- Build a better Sustainable Development infrastructure.
- Evaluate the gaps between Agenda 21 and reality.

The results of the summit have indicated that there has been very little progress on reducing environmental impacts and implementing Sustainable Development. Several key issues identified at the summit were: (a) the growing presence of toxic chemicals in the environment; (b) a growing scarcity of fresh water and the accompanying loss of productive farmland; (c) the continued destruction of forest; (d) growing marine pollution and its accompanying reduction in viable fisheries; and (e) the increase in global warming from heat trapping gases such as carbon dioxide.

Although it has been generally agreed that the summit made virtually no progress, participants did agree to a formal document regarding the preserving of forestry and cutting back on “greenhouse” gases. The result of this was a convention on global warming in December 1997, held in Kyoto, Japan. At this conference many nations signed an agreement to mandatory cutbacks in the emissions of “greenhouse gases” such as carbon dioxide and reached a consensus on specific timetables. Many less industrialized nations and the EU would like to see a 15% reduction by 2010, but the U.S. automakers have indicated that such a timeframe will throw the world into a recession. Additionally, leading up to the conference, the United States made strong statements concerning the future role of less-industrialized nations on global warming — in a few decades, the less industrialized nations will be impacting global warming at a much greater rate and they must take responsibility now, not later.

It will be interesting to see the results at “Rio +10.”

21.3 FINAL COMMENTS

Although the ISO 14001 Environmental Management Standards have not really taken hold in the United States, there are a few “signs” which may lead one to speculate on its progress. In late 1995, for instance, the Big Three U.S. Automakers speculated that they might go beyond the ISO 14001 requirements by developing a QS-14000 program and requiring their suppliers to have a joint QS-9000 and ISO 14001 third party certification. Representatives from the automakers have cited increasing environmental regulations as the reason for this speculation.

On the government level, in 1995 President Bill Clinton signed the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act into law which requires federal agencies to use existing technical standards (i.e., ANSI, ASTM, ASQC, and ASME for instance). For environmental compliance it is expected that federal agencies and facilities may look at the ISO 14000 series of standards. Companies supplying any materials and services to the federal government may ultimately also be required to implement the standards, as well.

Near the end of 1997, there were less than 50 companies in the United States certified to ISO 14001. In Europe and Asia, the list is in the hundreds. Even though several large U.S. firms were actively involved in the development of the standard, there has been relatively little progress in its acceptance in the United States. Much like the ISO 9001 Standards, many U.S. companies will feel the pressure to become certified to ISO 14001 from their customers, especially those in Europe and Asia.

If you are contemplating ISO 14001, it is highly recommended that your company seriously evaluate its implementation by integrating it into your existing quality management system. If for some reason you have not adopted a quality standard and you are strongly considering ISO 14001, this book may assist you to some degree in improving your quality management system as you implement the environmental management standard. The integration process has proven to be a very effective and cost efficient way to develop one management standard.