ISO14001:2015 Auditing Practices Group Guidance on

Auditing Life cycle perspective

The requirement for Life Cycle perspective is stated on two clauses viz. 6.1.2 and 8.1. Further explanations are given below.

6.1.2 Environmental aspects

Requirement

Within the defined scope of the environmental management system, the organization shall determine The environmental aspects of its activities, products and services that it can control and those that it can influence, and their associated environmental impacts, considering a life cycle perspective....

Guidance

There is no mandatory requirement to conduct LC assessment (ISO14040) however the various stages right from acquisition of raw materials, design, production, transportation/delivery, use, end-of-life treatment and final disposal need to be considered. This consideration will most likely prevent or minimise accumulation of environmental obligations or issues at any particular stage and would engage various entities in the life cycle stages to fulfil their own obligations e.g. design, transportation, logistics, usage, disposal etc. Therefore assessor needs to make sure that aspect and impact has covered the various stages. It is understood that some stages may be not applicable e.g. for a simple trading companies acquisition of raw material or design/engineering. Further it is also understood that some stages may not be under direct control e.g. transportation, usage, end of life treatment however there may be a possibility that company has influence on some of the activities or stages e.g. option to choose transporter with better EMS commitment or literature on how to dispose the product. Usually a simple train diagram is quite helpful to understand the various stages, extent of control and influence, please refer below.
Secondary activities could be

Admin/HR  Logistics  IT  Warranty  Maintenance

Therefore it would be worthwhile to look into both core and support processes with a view where organisation has direct control and where it can influence.

8.1 Operational planning and control

Requirement

Consistent with a life cycle perspective, the organization shall:

a) establish controls, as appropriate, to ensure that its environmental requirement(s) is (are) addressed in the design and development process for the product or service, considering each life cycle stage;

b) determine its environmental requirement(s) for the procurement of products and services, as appropriate;

c) communicate its relevant environmental requirement(s) to external providers, including contractors;

d) consider the need to provide information about potential significant environmental impacts associated with the transportation or delivery, use, end-of-life treatment and final disposal of its products and services.

The organization shall maintain documented information to the extent necessary to have confidence that the processes have been carried out as planned....
Guidance

This requirement is carried forward from 6.1.2, having identified the aspect and impact considering LC perspective; organisation needs to make sure that operational controls are in place including relevant criteria. This needs to include both areas under direct control or where organisation can influence. One of the key output from operational planning and control would be environmental requirement/information for procurement/subcontracting which needs to be communicated to external providers or contractors.

Examples- this could include information related to green or sustainable procurement, buying product/services which have least adverse impact e.g. energy savings, recycled material, generating less waste, lower water consumption etc. A simple example while hiring or buying company cars would be to check on fuel efficiency; similarly check power consumption when buying office equipment like bulbs, AC etc.

The clause also requires need to provide information about potential significant environmental impacts associated with transportation or delivery, use, end-of-life treatment and final disposal.

Examples of potential EMS issues could be:-

Transportation/delivery- usage of packing material, carbon foot print

Usage- consumption of energy, natural resources, wastage, emissions, nuisance etc.

End of life treatment- wastage, recovery, recycle, landfill issues etc.

Possible Questions related to Life Cycle perspective

- What is the approach used to identify aspect and impact using LC perspective.
- How it can be demonstrated that LC perspective has been used to during identification of aspect and impact and significant aspect. (6.1.2)?
- Could you show me the various LC stages within your organisation?
- How you can demonstrate that it covers all the core and support processes?
- Which LC stages your company has direct control and which it can influence?
- Where is the documented information pertaining to criteria used for identifying aspect and impact using LC perspective?
- What are the operational control requirements pertaining to significant aspects?
- How the operating criteria for processes defined and communicated?
- What are operational control requirements pertaining to aspects which company has direct control or which it can influence?
- What environmental requirements are identified pertaining to procurement and subcontracting activities. (check also relevance of logistics/transportation)?
- How these are communicated internally?
- How these environmental requirements are communicated to suppliers/external providers?
- How the company can demonstrate need to consider providing information about potential significant environmental impacts associated with the transportation or delivery, use, end-of-life treatment and final disposal of its products and services?
- What documented information is maintained/retained to demonstrate conformance.
For further information on the ISO 14001 Auditing Practices Group, please refer to the paper: Introduction to the ISO 14001 Auditing Practices Group

Feedback from users will be used by the ISO 14001 Auditing Practices Group to determine whether additional guidance documents should be developed, or if these current ones should be revised.

Comments on the papers or presentations can be sent to the following email address:

Nele.Zgavc@bsigroup.com

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