

A Case for Ethics Practice under the Revised ISO 14001:2015

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Abstract : The ISO 14001 management system standard was first published in 1996. It is a voluntary standard adopted by both private and public sector organizations globally. Adoption of the ISO 14001 standard at the corporate level is done to help manage business impacts on the environment e.g. pollution control. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) revised the standard in 2004 and recently in 2015. The current revision of the standard appears to adopt a communitarian-type philosophy. The inclusion of requirements to consider external 'interested party' needs and expectations implies this philosophy. Therefore, at operational level businesses implementing ISO 14001 will have to consider needs and expectations beyond local laws. Should these external needs and expectations be included in the scope of the environmental management system, they become requirements to be complied with in much the same way as compliance to laws. The authors assert that the recent changes to ISO 14001 introduce an ethical dimension to the standard. The authors assert that business ethics as a discipline now finds relevance in ISO 14001 via contemporary stakeholder theory and discourse ethics. Finally, the authors postulate implications of (not) addressing these requirements before July 2018 when transition to the revised standard must be complete globally.

Keywords : business ethics, environmental ethics, ethics practice, ISO 14001:2015

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