



Access to OSHISIS Knowledge Base

Environmental Aspects

The environmental aspect process remains largely intact. The latest version of 2026 clauses makes normal conditions explicit in the requirement, places emergency determination in Clause 6.1.2, and expands guidance on life cycle stages, environmental conditions and emergency scenarios.

Learning objectives

- Distinguish an environmental aspect from its associated environmental impact.
- Identify what is retained, strengthened, clarified or reworded in the requirement texts.
- Apply control, influence, life cycle perspective and significance criteria to practical activities.
- Update an existing aspect assessment without introducing requirements the standard does not prescribe.

How to read the references

Clause 6.1.2 contains mandatory requirements expressed by shall. Notes explain those requirements. Annex A.6.1.2 provides explanatory guidance and does not create additional standalone requirements. Practical examples and suggested records in these notes are training recommendations.

Reference: Both editions: Clause 6.1.2 and Annex A.6.1.2.

Source basis and limits

These notes use the 2015 and 2026 Clause 6.1.2 and Annex extracts supplied for this training task. They are a paraphrased comparison, not a reproduction of the standard or independent verification of its publication status. Cross references to Clauses 6.3, 8.2 and 7.5 identify related topics; their full requirements are not reproduced here. Use the applicable controlled standard for certification decisions.

Essential terminology

An aspect is an element of an activity, product or service that interacts or can interact with the environment. An impact is the resulting environmental change. For example, diesel combustion produces exhaust emissions as an aspect; deterioration of air quality and contribution to climate change are impacts. Do not record an activity alone as its environmental aspect.

Reference: Both editions: Clause 6.1.2; Annex A.6.1.2, cause and effect explanation.

1 Requirements that are maintained

Requirement	Training interpretation	Reference in both editions
Scope and control or influence	Assess activities, products and services within the EMS scope, including relevant aspects under influence.	6.1.2; A.6.1.2
Associated impacts	Connect each aspect with its actual or potential adverse or beneficial impacts.	6.1.2; A.6.1.2
Life cycle perspective	Consider applicable stages and the extent of control or influence at each stage.	6.1.2; A.6.1.2
Change	Include planned developments and new or modified activities, products and services.	6.1.2, 2015 item a; 2026 item b; A.6.1.2
Significant aspects	Use established criteria to determine aspects that have or can have significant impacts.	6.1.2; A.6.1.2
Communication	Communicate significant aspects to relevant levels and functions as appropriate.	6.1.2
Documented information	Make aspects and impacts, significance criteria and significant aspects available as documented information.	6.1.2; related control topic 7.5

Life cycle perspective remains proportionate

The familiar stages are raw material acquisition, design, production, transportation or delivery, use, end of life treatment and final disposal. Applicable stages depend on the activity, product or service. A detailed life cycle assessment is not required. Consider stages meaningfully rather than applying a generic list without checking relevance.

Reference: 2015: 6.1.2 and A.6.1.2. 2026: 6.1.2 Note 1 and A.6.1.2.

Control and influence remain essential

Direct operational control is only one part of the assessment. Relevant suppliers, external processes, transport, customer use and end of life may also fall within influence. The organization determines the extent of its control and influence; limited influence does not justify ignoring a relevant life cycle stage.

Reference: Both editions: 6.1.2 and A.6.1.2, control and influence discussion.

2 Requirements made more explicit

Normal operating conditions

The 2015 normative clause named abnormal conditions and reasonably foreseeable emergencies; normal conditions appeared in the Annex guidance. The supplied 2026 Clause 6.1.2(a) explicitly requires normal and abnormal conditions. This strengthens the wording of the requirement, rather than introducing normal operations as a wholly new concept.

Reference: 2015: 6.1.2(b), A.6.1.2 operating conditions. 2026: 6.1.2(a), A.6.1.2.

Determination of potential emergency situations

The 2026 text includes a separate shall statement to determine potential emergency situations and links it to Clause 8.2. It also requires considering those situations during aspect determination. Do not teach this as entirely new across the EMS: the earlier edition already addressed emergency identification under Clause 6.1.1, as indicated by the supplied 2015 Annex cross reference.

Reference: 2015: 6.1.2(b); A.6.1.2 cross reference to 6.1.1. 2026: 6.1.2 emergency determination statement and item c; related 8.2.

Change and its connection to planning

Considering change is retained. The 2026 text adds a cross reference to Clause 6.3. In implementation, a proposed new chemical, process, building, capacity increase or closure should trigger a check of relevant aspects and impacts. The cross reference itself does not prescribe a particular form or software workflow.

Reference: 2015: 6.1.2(a). 2026: 6.1.2(b), referring to 6.3. Both: A.6.1.2.

Life cycle note and documentary wording

2026 Note 1 brings life cycle stages next to the requirement. The note explains the retained obligation; it is not an additional shall requirement. The wording for records changes from maintaining documented information to information being available as documented information. The three information categories remain the same, and a register is one possible format.

Reference: 2015: 6.1.2 documented information statement; A.6.1.2 life cycle stages. 2026: 6.1.2 Note 1 and documented information statement; related 7.5.

3 Expanded Annex guidance

Topic	What the 2026 guidance makes clearer	Reference
Land and coastal settings	Use of space becomes land use; use of marine and coastal areas is expressly added. Check applicability to the actual operation.	2015 A.6.1.2(h); 2026 A.6.1.2(h–i)
Emitted energy	Vibration and sound are listed separately, replacing the vibration and noise wording. The emitted energy category remains.	Both A.6.1.2(f)
Facility end of life	Decommissioning is expressly included alongside operation and maintenance. Consider residual chemicals, demolition waste and contamination.	2026 A.6.1.2 activity examples

Topic	What the 2026 guidance makes clearer	Reference
Downstream activities	Post delivery activities are explicit. Installation, servicing or returns may be relevant depending on the product or service.	2026 A.6.1.2 activity examples
Design stage prevention	Design choices can reduce impacts at later life cycle stages. Detailed LCA is still unnecessary.	2026 A.6.1.2 life cycle discussion
Abnormal conditions	Rare, atypical or unplanned conditions can introduce aspects or change existing ones; adverse environmental conditions can increase releases.	2026 A.6.1.2 abnormal conditions
Emergency analysis	Consider onsite hazards, likely type and scale of emergencies, nearby facilities, severe weather and past incidents.	2026 A.6.1.2 emergency guidance
Environmental conditions	Environmental conditions are expressly included among possible significance criteria. Sensitive receptors and water scarcity can affect evaluation.	2026 A.6.1.2 significance criteria
Relative significance	Significance can differ between organizations and change over time; the criteria still need consistent application.	2026 A.6.1.2 significance explanation

These are Annex clarifications and examples. They support interpretation of Clause 6.1.2 but do not automatically require a separate marine assessment, decommissioning register or annual scoring exercise for every organization.

4 Significance evaluation and practical examples

Use environmental criteria first

Both Annex texts explain that environmental criteria are the primary and minimum basis for significance assessment. Criteria may relate to the aspect, such as type, size or frequency, or the impact, such as scale, severity, duration or exposure. The 2026 Annex additionally names environmental conditions.

Reference: Both: A.6.1.2 significance criteria; mandatory use of established criteria in 6.1.2.

Legal requirements and interested party concerns may elevate an aspect to significance. They should not downgrade an aspect that is significant on environmental grounds. No specific law applies is therefore an inadequate reason to declare a severe environmental impact insignificant.

Reference: Both: A.6.1.2, other criteria and prohibition on downgrading environmental significance.

There is no mandatory scoring formula

The organization chooses a method that produces consistent results. A numerical matrix is optional. Document the criteria and apply them consistently; avoid manipulating scores to achieve a preferred list of significant aspects.

Reference: Both: 6.1.2 established criteria; A.6.1.2 method and consistency.

Example of diesel storage and associated operations

Condition or scenario	Environmental aspect	Associated impact
Normal fuel transfer	Small fugitive hydrocarbon emissions	Deterioration of air quality
Abnormal transfer leakage	Diesel release onto soil	Soil contamination
Emergency tank rupture	Large diesel release reaching drains	Surface water and soil contamination
Fire at storage area	Smoke emissions and contaminated firefighting runoff	Air pollution and water contamination
Flooding of storage area	Floodwater mobilizes stored fuel or residues	Offsite water and land contamination

Reference: Training illustration applying 2026 6.1.2(a, c) and A.6.1.2; no significance result is assumed.

Assess significance using actual quantities, containment, release pathways, receiving environment and established criteria. Fuel storage alone should not be labelled resource consumption without identifying the relevant use or loss of fuel. Consider nearby roads or facilities where their emergency scenarios could affect the site.

5 What has changed wording and what is not prescribed

No substantive removal identified in the supplied extracts

Inputs and outputs, intended and unintended outputs, current and relevant past activities, start up and shutdown, past incidents, beneficial impacts and the minimum environmental criteria remain covered. The earlier cross reference to A.1 for managing change is replaced in emphasis by the explicit 2026 normative reference to 6.3; this is not removal of change consideration.

Reference: Both: 6.1.2 and A.6.1.2; 2015 A.6.1.2 reference to A.1; 2026 6.1.2(b) reference to 6.3.

Wording change	Correct interpretation	Reference
Use of space to land use plus marine and coastal areas	Reworded and expanded environmental examples; not abandonment of spatial impacts.	Both A.6.1.2 aspect lists
Outsourced processes to externally provided processes	Updated terminology; relevant external aspects under influence remain included.	Both A.6.1.2 influence discussion
Prior emergency occurrences to past incidents	Historical learning remains within the emergency discussion.	Both A.6.1.2 operating conditions
Maintain to available as documented information	Required information categories remain; do not infer permission to omit or leave the information uncontrolled.	Both 6.1.2; related 7.5

Items not explicitly prescribed by Clause 6.1.2

- A particular aspect register layout, separate registers for each operating condition or numerical significance threshold.
- A probability multiplied by severity formula or a formal quantitative risk assessment.
- A detailed life cycle assessment, carbon footprint calculation for every aspect or biodiversity assessment for every organization.
- A fixed annual reassessment frequency. Relevance and consistency still matter when conditions or activities change.

Reference: Limits of the supplied 6.1.2 texts; detailed LCA exception expressly explained in both A.6.1.2 texts.

These limits concern Clause 6.1.2 only. They do not show that the wider standard, compliance obligations or organization specific commitments contain no related expectations. Likewise, an absent example in an Annex list is not an exemption from identifying a relevant aspect.

6 Implementation review and learning activity

Review the existing method using five lenses

Operating conditions

Check normal, abnormal, start up, shutdown and emergency scenarios. Do not assume routine entries capture all operating states.

Reference: 2026 6.1.2(a, c); A.6.1.2

Change

Check planned and modified activities, developments and closure or decommissioning where relevant. Link the review to change planning.

Reference: 2026 6.1.2(b), referring to 6.3; A.6.1.2

Life cycle

Check applicable upstream and downstream stages, including design and post delivery, and explain the extent of control or influence.

Reference: 2026 6.1.2 and Note 1; A.6.1.2

Environmental setting

Check air, water, land, resources, energy, waste and land or marine area use. Consider receptors and environmental conditions.

Reference: 2026 A.6.1.2 aspect examples and significance criteria

Changing significance

Check whether operational change, incidents, environmental conditions or interested party concerns require reevaluation using the established criteria.

Reference: 2026 6.1.2 established criteria; A.6.1.2 significance discussion

Suggested evidence to support the review

Use an aspect assessment or equivalent controlled information covering activities, operating conditions, applicable life cycle stages, aspects, impacts, criteria and significance decisions. Change reviews, emergency scenario assessments and communication records can support the explanation. These are suggested evidence formats, not prescribed document titles.

Reference: 2026 6.1.2 documentation and communication; A.6.1.2; related topics 6.3, 7.5 and 8.2.

Participant exercise

Select one activity such as chemical storage, boiler operation or product delivery. Identify one normal aspect, one abnormal aspect and one emergency aspect; state their impacts. Add a relevant life cycle stage under influence, then explain how environmental conditions could alter significance. Apply your established criteria and identify who needs the result communicated.

Trainer check: answers must distinguish activity, aspect and impact, justify significance using environmental criteria, and correctly distinguish Clause requirements from Annex examples. Upgrade a sound 2015 process by closing specific gaps rather than rebuilding it without evidence.