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Sustainable Environmental Standards and You

In every domain of life, humans have created standards, which dictate how we will progress, develop, grow, and change. In the context of sustainability, certain sets of standards have been developed to ensure that our actions protect the environment for our wellbeing and the wellbeing of people in the future. This article will explore some of these standards, created both internationally and in various countries as well as what you can do to follow them.

A standard is defined as a set of agreed-upon rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their outcomes. These standards are the distilled wisdom of people who are experts in their fields and who know the needs of the organizations they represent. While some standards may be voluntary, others are mandatory, and can be enforced by law or regulation, for health or safety reasons. Many standards are internationally agreed upon by experts and are regulated by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Some of the most commonly used families of standards include

- ISO 45000 - Occupational health and safety
- ISO 14000 - Environmental management
- ISO 20121 – Sustainable events
- ISO 22000 - Food safety management

Today, many standards have been developed to help promote sustainable development such as management system standards, service standards and design standards. Management system standards define and establish the quality policy and objective of an



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organization, while service standards specify the requirements that must be met by a service and establish its fitness for purpose.

Design standards specify the design or technical characteristics of a product. A category associated with this family is sustainable architecture standards, which seek to minimize the negative environmental impact of the building through efficiency and moderation in the use of materials, energy, space management and the ecosystem in general. Some performance-based rating systems, such as Energy Star for homes, are formalized and set benchmarks to be met. One such green building certification program used worldwide is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Developed by an American non-profit organization, LEED certification is a set of rating systems for the design, construction, operation, maintenance and renovation of green buildings and homes. In addition to LEED, Canada has also developed a separate rating system for its regulation and climate.

In conclusion, these standards have helped to create more sustainable goods and services. Unfortunately, standards such as LEED certified projects often have a higher price tag, but they create many environmental benefits compared to non-certified projects. There are several things that can be done every day to follow these standards:

- Follow the rules and standards set by the employees of the departments you contribute to;
- Apply the concepts of reduce, reuse and recycle that are included in the 3RE theory (see articles written in the April through June 2021 ASEQ-EHAQ newsletters for more details);
- See the ASEQ-EHAQ Eco Living Guide (www.EcoLivingGuide.ca) for other things you can do.



Online links:

- Types of standards, Standards Council of Canada, copyright in 2020, <https://www.scc.ca/en/types-standards>
- ISO standards, International Standardization Organization, copyright in 2021, <https://www.iso.org/standards.html>
- Canada Green Building Council, copyright in 2021, <https://www.cagbc.org/>
- Sustainable architecture, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, last modification made on May 9th 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_architecture
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental design, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, last modification made on June 5th 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leadership_in_Energy_and_Environmental_Design