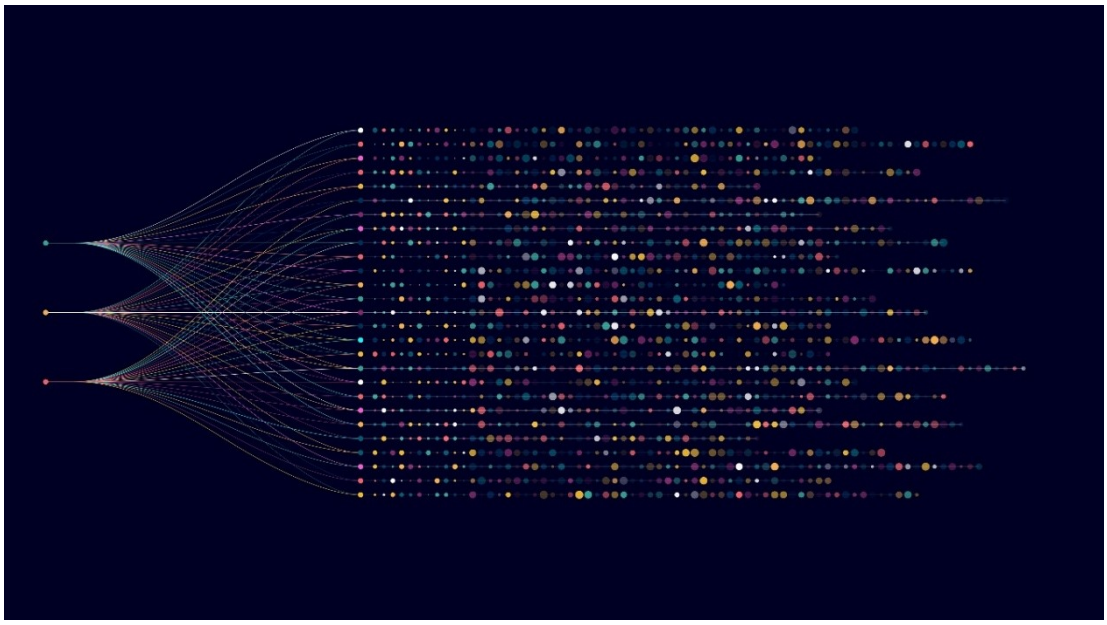
ISO 22301 Overview and Guidance

This guidance document provides an overview of the **ISO 22301:2019 Business Continuity Management Systems** standard.



Introduction

ISO 22301 Business Continuity Management Systems sets out the requirements for a business continuity management system (BCMS). Its aim is to help organisations identify threats to their operations, and to prepare, exercise and test arrangements so that they can continue to deliver products and services at an acceptable level during a disruption, and recover from it.

The current version of the standard is **ISO 22301:2019**. Amendment 1, published in 2024, adds that organisations must determine whether climate change is a relevant issue, and notes that relevant interested parties can have requirements related to climate change.

ISO 22301 follows the harmonised structure used by ISO management system standards (formerly known as Annex SL), so its clauses align closely with ISO 9001, ISO 27001 and other management system standards, which makes it straightforward to run them together as an integrated management system.

Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined, with leadership and commitment from top management.

Business Continuity Management

An effective BCMS needs business continuity plans and arrangements that are reviewed, exercised and tested on an ongoing basis, with business continuity objectives set and monitored. Two of the key requirements are a business impact analysis and a risk assessment. The business impact analysis looks at how the impact of a disruption to each activity grows over time, sets the time within which each activity must be resumed (the recovery time objective), and identifies the prioritised activities and the resources and dependencies, including suppliers, that they need. The risk assessment identifies, analyses and evaluates the risks of disruption to those prioritised activities.

Business continuity strategies and solutions are then chosen to address the risks, for before, during and after a disruption, taking account of the costs and benefits.

Procedures and Testing

Business continuity plans and procedures set out the response structure, who does what when normal operations are disrupted, how a plan is activated, how warnings and communication are handled and how activities are recovered. Each plan includes its purpose, scope and objectives and the roles and responsibilities of the team that puts it into action.

An exercise programme is also required. Exercises and tests are based on appropriate scenarios and consistent with the business continuity objectives, and over time validate the business continuity strategies and solutions, with post-exercise reports and actions to improve.

Key areas organisations must consider to comply with the standard;

- Business continuity policy and other key documentation
- Actions to address risks and opportunities
- Business continuity objectives and planning to achieve them
- Business impact analysis and risk assessment
- Business continuity strategies and solutions
- Business continuity plans and procedures, including warning and communication
- Exercise programme
- Evaluation of business continuity documentation and capabilities

ISO 22301:2019 Certification Audit

During an audit the auditor(s) will be looking for objective evidence that each clause in the standard has been met and complied with.

As well as reviewing all the relevant clauses, there are various things you can prepare and have in place prior to the audit;

- Completed and up-to-date management review, including the business impact analysis, risk assessment and lessons learned from disruptions
- Completed internal audit(s) covering business continuity
- Business impact analysis and risk assessment, reviewed at planned intervals
- Business continuity strategies, plans and procedures that are up to date
- Evidence of exercises and tests, with post-exercise reports and actions
- Evidence of roles clearly identified, including the response team
- Evidence of worker awareness of business continuity and of their role in a disruption
- Business continuity objectives and plans to achieve them
- Evidence that the continuity arrangements of key suppliers have been evaluated
- Evidence that climate change has been considered when determining external and internal issues (clause 4.1)

More on the audit process and preparing for certification:

- **ISO Certification Guidance: isoassured.co.uk/resources/iso-certification-help**
- **Remote support: isomanaged.com/iso-consultancy-support**

More on ISO 22301, clause by clause, in the isomanaged.com knowledge base:

- **isomanaged.com/knowledge-base/iso-standards/iso-22301**