

Major Differences between ISO 9001 and ISM Code

The International Management Code for the Safe Operation of Ships and for Pollution Prevention (ISM Code) provides an international standard for safe management and operation of ships and for pollution prevention. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) mandates the application of the ISM Code to all vessels and the ISM Code is mandatory to all vessels of 500 gross tonnages and upward and this includes mobile offshore drilling units.

The ISM Code requires that companies establish safety objectives as per section 1.2 of the ISM Code and in addition the companies are required to develop, implement and maintain a safety management system which includes functional requirements as per section 1.4 of the ISM Code.

While the ISO 9001 is not mandatory, the ISM Code is a mandatory requirement for vessels trading internationally. For vessels trading in the domestic waters national governments may legislate to use the ISM Code. The ISM Code section 1.3 which states that the ISM Code may be applied to all ships is now being brought in for domestic vessels by most countries. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has been implementing portions of the Code, and is systematically considering applying the ISM Code to ferries. The application of the ISM Code is meant to support and encourage the development of a safety culture in shipping. Success factors for this safety culture are a commitment to values and beliefs.

Both ISO 9001 and the ISM Code specify a systematic approach to management by those responsible for management of ships. Qualified ISO 9001 auditors who have the competence required to determine the effectiveness of a system are encouraged to attend the ISM Code course to determine the effectiveness of the Company's safety management system.

The ISM Code describes the responsibilities of the Master and the Designated Person (Management Representative). Job descriptions are required for these and other crew. "Manning agents" are subcontractors of the company and are required to provide trained sea farers. Training is specified for the crew and personnel ashore. Consider how to audit the linkage of training records to the rapidly changing identity of the crew.

Quality planning for shipping is a complex process. For example, cruising or sailing the high seas and inland waterways is risky enough to demand procedures that identify, describe and respond to potential emergencies from dock to dock. Accidents and hazardous occurrences (near misses) are fed into the corrective action process.

As you should expect, maintenance of the ship and equipment goes way beyond the comparatively bland requirement of 7.5.1 in ISO 9001:2008.

Most other requirements are shared with ISO 9001. By knowing ISO 9001 and relating this knowledge to the ISM Code, maritime students succeeding on our dually accredited class for training ISO 9001 lead auditors should also feel confident enough to conduct ISM audits of management systems both aboard and ashore.

ISM Code with ISO 9001 provides a basis for ensuring management systems are also driven by customer needs for the continued success of shipping companies around the world