ISO safety standards protect the health and safety of people and communities.

ISO safety standards save lives and reduce injury.

ISO standards provide construction industry stakeholders with the information they need to compete on global markets.

ISO safety standards protect children, the elderly and other vulnerable populations.
ISO – What it is, what it achieves

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is the world’s largest developer of voluntary International Standards with a current portfolio of more than 19,500* providing benefits for business, government and society. ISO is a network comprising the national standards institutes of 164* countries. ISO standards make a positive contribution to the world we live in. They promote quality, ecology, safety, reliability, compatibility, interoperability, efficiency and effectiveness – and at an economical cost. They facilitate trade, spread knowledge and share technological advances and good management practices.

Why ISO standards for safety?

Safety is defined as being protected from – or unlikely to cause – danger, risk or injury. Ensuring the safety of citizens is one of the most important priorities for societies around the world.

Among the many fields where ISO International Standards ensure safety are transportation and construction. From safety in buildings – emergency, fire and alarm systems – to standards that protect car drivers and passengers (child restraint systems, anti-locking braking systems and airbags), to food safety, quality and machinery, ISO helps to make the world a safer place.

Who benefits from ISO standards?

For industry, ISO standards are strategic tools for businesses to gain competitive advantage through products and services that are safe, reliable and trustworthy.

For regulators, ISO standards provide tools to assess and evaluate conformity, providing a technical base for health and safety legislation.

For consumers, ISO standards safeguard their interests by ensuring the products and services they purchase are safe and reliable.

What ISO standards for safety?

The value of safety cannot be over-emphasized. Unsafe machines can kill or injure operators and result in costly lawsuits. Unsafe food can provoke illness, even death, among thousands, potentially millions, of consumers. ISO standards prevent unsafe consumer products from being designed, manufactured and sold, addressing all potential hazards. Increasingly, standards are being developed for the services sector, including safety aspects related to delivery.

Product safety

Statistics indicate that design problems, malfunctions and inadequate safety information are all contributing to the high number of injuries resulting from using products, whatever the sector. ISO product safety standards provide universal guidance and practical tools to identify, assess, eliminate or reduce potential safety risks, to eliminate them before the products are sold. Typical hazard reduction measures include protection against electric shock, excessive temperatures and fire, reducing the risk of injury in emergencies.

* January 2013
Food safety
Unsafe food can be dangerous and the consequences costly. The importance of this challenge is reflected by ISO’s response. Some 1,000 ISO standards focus on food, also tackling issues of safety hazards – from test methods to product specifications. The ISO 22000 series helps the global food supply chain identify and control food safety hazards to eliminate weak links. Requirements and good practice to make water safe are contained in a suite of ISO standards (see the brochure ISO & water).

Machine (industrial) safety
All over the world, injuries can result from the use of machines at work, at home, at leisure activities. ISO safety standards reduce these risks. Many ISO standards include safety requirements applicable to specific machines; others address general safety concepts in manufacturing and in the use, operation and repair of machinery.

Buildings and structural safety
The construction and occupation of a building or structure can result in unnecessary risk of injury or damage. ISO standards for the safe design of buildings or structures (bridges, tunnels, dams, etc.) protect not only the people using those structures, but the structures themselves, ensuring operational continuity. Whether it is a question of inspection, maintenance or repair, ISO focuses on all stages.

Road safety
Road traffic injuries are a major public health problem and a leading cause of death, injury and disability around the world. ISO standards for road safety focus on subjects from braking systems, wheels and road-holding ability, to crash protection, child-restraint systems and the side-impact dummies used for crash testing. ISO 39001:2012, a management system standard for road traffic safety, is a major contribution to the United Nations’ Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

Child safety
Child and adolescent injuries are a major cause of death and long-term disability. ISO standards play a central role in injury prevention. From guidelines on child safety to specific standards related to products such as playpens, folding cots, high chairs, prams and pushchairs, as well as car seats and protective headgear – ISO ensures the safety of children through its portfolio of International Standards.

Elderly people and persons with disabilities
At least 650 million people globally are affected by some kind of disability; one quarter of all citizens in developed countries are 60 or older. ISO standards enhance quality of life, reduce discrimination and, at the same time, generate user-friendly products for all. From wide-ranging standards on ergonomics and accessibility, to specific product standards related to wheelchairs or other mobility devices, ISO helps improve safety and quality of life. The guidelines given by ISO/IEC Guide 71:2001 provide state-of-the-art solutions to the challenges encountered by this vulnerable population.

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ISO's expanding safety portfolio

Globalization has pushed the need for International Standards and has broadened the concern for safety – reflected in the increasing scope of safety standardization. An extensive array of safety-related standards are under way on issues as varied as risk management, product recall, consumer product safety, cross-border trade of second-hand goods, anti-counterfeiting tools, fraud countermeasures and controls as well as the safety of amusement park rides and toys.

Developing and implementing internationally accepted standards for safety requires, more than ever, the involvement of the world community. This is precisely what the ISO system enables with strong partnerships between government, inter-governmental organizations and the private sector. By strengthening its international partnerships and working successfully with key stakeholders, ISO standards contribute effectively to a safer world.

ISO resources

ISO’s Website (in English and French, with top levels in Russian and individual publications in other languages)
www.iso.org

ISO Focus+ magazine
(10 editions annually in English and French)
www.iso.org/isofocus+

ISO videos
www.iso.org/youtube

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www.iso.org/isomembers

Attention standards writers!