

# World Scene



**WATER FOR LIFE**  
2005-2015

Water is critical for sustainable development, including environmental integrity and the alleviation of poverty and hunger, and is indispensable for human health and well-being.

The UN General Assembly agreed in December 2003 to proclaim the years 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", beginning with World Water Day, 22 March, 2005.

The Water for Life decade sets the world's goals on "a greater focus on water-related issues, while striving to ensure the participation of women in water-related development efforts, and further cooperation at all levels to achieve water-related goals of the Millennium Declaration, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development and Agenda 21."

The assembly called upon the relevant UN bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds, to make "Water for Life" a "decade for action".

The first water decade from 1981 to 1990 brought water to over a billion people and sanitation to almost 770 million. Much more still needs to be done. Safe water supply and adequate sanitation to protect health are among the basic human rights. Today, there are still almost 1.1 billion people

who have inadequate access to water and 2.4 billion without appropriate sanitation.

ISO technical committees ISO/TC 147 and ISO/TC 224 are developing International Standards designed to improve water quality and the quality of service related to drinking water supply and wastewater sewerage, respectively.

**For more information:**  
[www.wwd.org](http://www.wwd.org)

## Common contactless communications standard

MasterCard International and Visa International have agreed to share a common communications protocol and associated testing requirements for radio frequency-based contactless payments at the point of sale. Contactless payment programs from the two companies allow cardholders to tap or wave integrated circuit cards, or "proximity cards," in front of a reader to speed through a checkout or transaction process. The protocol is based on ISO/IEC 14443, developed by the Joint Technical Committee JTC1, *Information technology*.



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The agreement between MasterCard and Visa means that proximity cards and terminals supporting their contactless payment applications will conform to the same standard and undergo equivalent testing, resulting in fewer implementation costs for vendors and faster time to market for financial institutions and merchants.

Contactless payment applications like these fall under smart card technologies that use radio frequency (RF) chips to automatically identify objects or people. The Smart Card Alli-

ance generally defines radio frequency identification (RFID) tag technology as that which is used in applications that identify or track objects, and contactless smart card technology as that which is used in applications that identify people or store financial or personal information.

Proximity card payments are convenient for consumers because they eliminate the need for cash and are ideal for quick payment environments such as restaurants, gas stations, supermarkets and movie theatres. Proximity cards also lend themselves to new opportunities for accepting card-based payments in unattended sales environments, such as vending machines and tollways.

## Phasing out single-hull tankers

A new regulation banning the carriage of heavy grade oil in single-hull oil tankers entered into force on 5 April 2005. It specifies that tankers of single-hull construction should be phased out or converted to a "double-hull" according to a schedule based on their year of delivery.

Oil tankers transport some 1 800 million tonnes of crude oil around the world by sea, including 50 % of US oil imports (crude oil and refined products). Most of the time, oil is transported quietly and safely. The double-hull requirements for oil tankers are principally designed to reduce the risk of oil spills from tankers involved in low-energy collisions or groundings.

Measures introduced by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have helped ensure that the majority of oil tankers are both safely built and operated, and are constructed to reduce the amount of oil spilled in the event of an accident. Operational pollution, such as from routine tank cleaning operations, has also been cut.

ISO has published two standards defining technical specifications for, respectively, construction



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(ISO 15401) and repair (ISO 15402) quality of the hull structure of bulk carriers. The two standards, which contain a large amount of state-of-the-art technical data, were developed by ISO at the specific request of the IMO in 2000.

**For more information:**  
[www.imo.int](http://www.imo.int)

## Home appliances built for elderly fingers

Elderly populations are growing in size in many parts of the world and increasingly, products and services will need to be designed with them in mind. The gradual loss of vision, flexibility, and coordination that elderly people experience can make certain models of household appliances either easier or more difficult to use. Other conditions, such as arthritis, that are common in the elderly can also cause problems in the use of appliances.

In recognition of this growing phenomenon, the IEC is reviewing how to formalize consideration of the elderly and disabled in some of its standards for household appliances, such as electric irons, electric toasters, food processors, coffee makers and deep-fat fryers.

The initiative, taken by IEC Subcommittee 59L (Small household appliances), is in direct response to the principles outlined in ISO/IEC Guide 71, *Guidelines for standardization to address the needs of older persons and people with disabilities*.

In stressing ergonomics for the elderly, SC 59L adheres to the principles laid down in Guide 71, namely: the need for accessibility by all consumers, as well as consumer representation on, and a relevant exchange of information between, standards bodies and research programmes.

**For more information:**  
[www.iec.ch](http://www.iec.ch)



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