

ISO 21101 Conformity Increasingly Required for Adventure Tourism Programs Globally

What is ISO? What is ISO 21101?

ISO is the International Organization for Standardization. It's a Switzerland-based NGO with a membership of over 160 national standards bodies. ISO (iso.org) publishes voluntary consensus standards developed by subject matter specialists. Founded in 1947, it has published over 20,000 standards regarding almost all industries.

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is the ISO member from the USA.

ISO 21101 is a voluntary standard describing Safety Management Systems for adventure tourism providers. The most current version is from 2014. The full title of the standard is "ISO 21101:2014 Adventure tourism — Safety management systems — Requirements."

The standard is designed to provide an outline that can be used to design a Safety Management System (SMS). This document is sometimes called a risk management plan or risk assessment and management system, although those terms can also have somewhat different meanings.

ISO 21101 has two companion documents. ISO 21102:2020 Adventure tourism — Leaders — Personnel competence describes competencies of adventure tourism activity leaders. ISO 21103:2014 Adventure tourism — Information for participants describes information to be provided to adventure tourism participants.

A sample of other standards published by ISO which may influence wilderness risk management includes:

ISO 31000 Risk management – Guidelines

ISO 13289:2011 Recreational diving services

- Requirements for the conduct of snorkelling excursions

ISO 24803:2017 Recreational diving services

Requirements for recreational diving providers

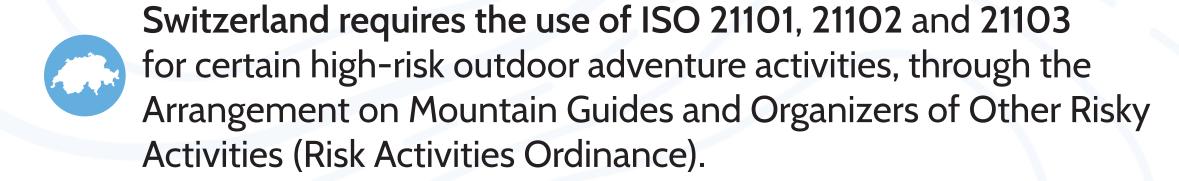
ISO 31030:2021 Travel risk management

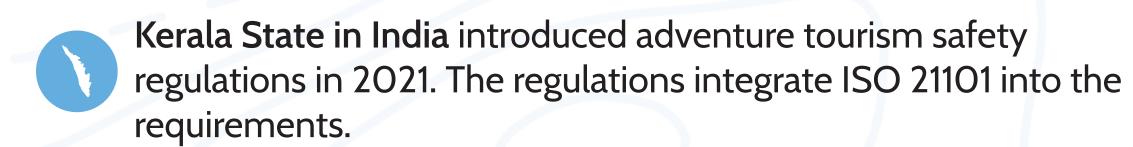
Guidance for organizations

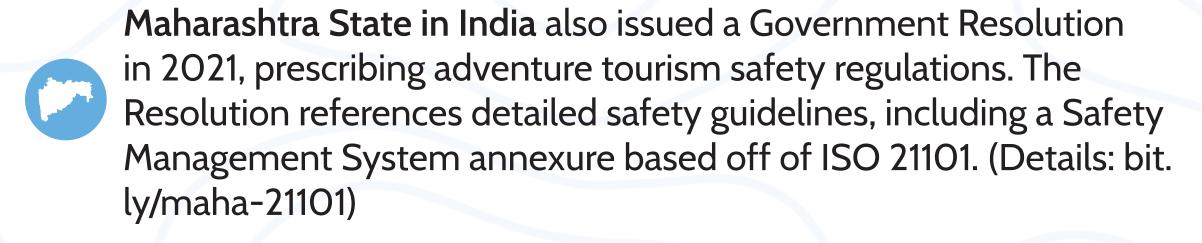
ISO/WD 31031 Managing risk for youth and school trips (under development)

What's happening with ISO 21101?

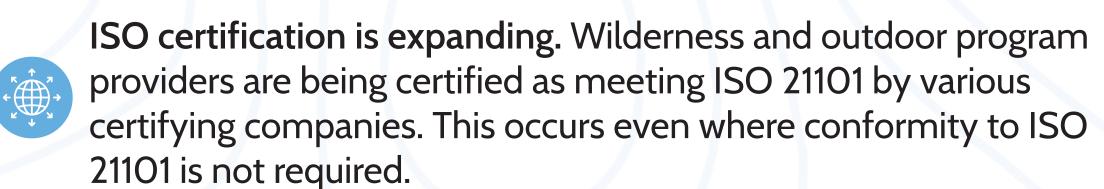
ISO 21101 is becoming adopted as a compulsory standard in parts of the world.











Why is this important to me?

If you provide certain outdoor adventures in some locations, you may have to conform to ISO 21101 standards.

If ISO 21101 conformance becomes compulsory where you currently operate, you must meet them or face penalties.

What are benefits and criticisms of ISO 21101?



Benefits

ISO provides consensus standards developed through a deliberative, inclusive process

ISO standards are trusted worldwide by those seeking reliable guidance



Criticisms

ISO 21101 relies on a linear incident causation theory which critics call outdated

ISO 21101 is a generic framework (essentially: assess and treat risks) applicable to any industry. But it provides no detailed outdoor adventure guidance that providers may seek.

Where can I learn more?

Learn more about ISO 21101 and related topics through these resources:

Risk Management for Outdoor Programs 40-hour online training: courses.viristar.com

Outdoor safety textbook: viristar.com/book

Custom consulting on outdoor safety: viristar.com/wildernessoutdoor-risk-management



viristar.com

