



GREEN BUILDING BLOCKS

This week we take a brief look at the upcoming introduction of a new ISO standard for energy management in commercial buildings, known as ISO 50001. We also review the American Institute of Architects' architecture billings data for the month of April.

New ISO standard coming for energy management in commercial buildings

The International Organization for Standardization (which goes by the acronym ISO) is the world's largest developer and publisher of international standards. This non-governmental organization is responsible for developing key standards in almost every economic sector and claims to "only develop standards for which there is a clear market requirement." ISO standards are highly influential and often widely adopted, as evidenced by the success of ISO 9001 which has more than one million certifications and has become the global benchmark for quality management. That's why we took note that ISO soon plans to introduce ISO 50001, an international standard for energy management.

According to ISO, ISO 50001 "will establish a framework for industrial plants, commercial facilities or entire organizations to manage energy." The standard is designed to be compatible with existing ISO standards, including 9001 (quality management) and 14001 (environmental management). Notably, ISO estimates that ISO 50001 could influence 60% of the world's energy use and is being designed to provide the following benefits:

- A framework for integrating energy efficiency into management practices
- Making better use of energy-consuming assets
- Benchmarking, measuring, documenting, and reporting energy intensity improvements and their projected impact on reductions in greenhouse gas emissions
- Transparency and communication on the management of energy resources
- Energy management best practices and good energy management behaviors
- Evaluating and prioritizing the implementation of new energy-efficient technologies
- A framework for promoting energy efficiency throughout the supply chain
- Energy management improvements in the context of GHG emission reduction projects

A receptive market for ISO 50001

According to a recent webinar sponsored by GreenBiz.com, there has been a generally positive market response to the proposed ISO 50001 standard. Companies like the idea of an international energy management standard, as it will: 1) enable benchmarking; 2) provide a systematic roadmap to achieve energy savings; 3) help in the documentation of energy savings for legislative requirements; and 4) further help drive supply chain initiatives. There is also support for ISO 50001 because it is based on measurement and verification, which should enable companies help conform to their own stated energy policies. We note that energy is the third-largest expense for businesses, representing an average of 19% of total expenses (employees and real estate are the two largest expense categories), and accounts for 75% of a company's carbon footprint.