

BS 25999 and ISO 232301

The standards are essentially the same in terms of content and Code of Practice

In May 2012, the International Standardisation Organization (ISO) published ISO 22301 – Business continuity management systems – Requirements. ISO 22301 blends the requirements from several national standards, including those from the USA, Japan, Singapore, Canada and Australia. The similarity with the UK's BS 25999-2, however, is very clear. A close comparison of the BS and ISO standards shows little difference in the requirements. In fact in some clauses such as Clause 8 of the ISO, which sets out the business continuity programme requirements, the text is identical in many places.

The similarity between the two standards' principles, requirements, and terms means that BSI will withdraw BS 25999-2. The UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) has announced a two year transition plan which should enable organisations to obtain accredited certification to ISO 22301 during the course of their normal BS 25999 audit visits. UKAS will not issue certification or renewals to the BS 25999-2 standard after May 2014.

The standards are designed to help provider understand and implement a BC management system. A management system is a framework for managing and improving the provider's policies, procedures, and processes. This concept can be difficult for those not familiar with a "management systems approach". In general the management system is a combination of the popular Plan Do Check Act (PDCA) method used in standards such as ISO 14000 on Environment and ISO 27000 on IT Security - and the "Process Approach" used in ISO 9000 on quality. The headings in ISO 22301 include: Terminology; Understanding the organisation Leadership; Planning; Support; Operation; Performance evaluation; and Improvement. The business continuity management requirements in BS 25999-2 are mirrored in ISO 22301 and include: conducting a business impact analysis; business continuity strategy; protection and mitigation; incident response structure; business continuity plans; recovery; and exercising and testing.

As with all requirement standards, ISO 22301 includes many "shall" statements. The guidance clarifies the intent of the requirements and there is a direct correlation between the clauses in the requirements and guidance.

But what will happen to BS 25999-1, Business continuity management: Code of Practice? It is likely that the BSI additional guidance will be used in relation to the ISO in future but as ISO have a much longer development time, the BSI Code of practice and related guidance documents will remain available to those who need them for the foreseeable future. Given the quality of this additional guidance, and its relationship with the ISO, it is possible that BS 25999-1: Code of practice will be revised to include the most current available information and remain in places for a very long time.

