

OHSAS 18001 Step by Step

A Practical Guide

Naeem Sadiq



IT Governance Publishing

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EXTRACT



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FOREWORD

People do not go to work in order to get injured or fall sick. 'Take care' and 'be safe' are often the last words exchanged with one's family before leaving home for work each day. It is, therefore, surprising that it took decades of indifference for organisations across the globe to realise that safe and healthy work environments are just about the first need of every individual who leaves home for work.

This book is about establishing an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system based on the OHSAS 18001 standard. Occupational health deals with the promotion and maintenance of physical and mental health of workers, and their protection from disease and health-related risks. Safety, on the other hand, is often defined as freedom from unacceptable risk or harm. The subject of occupational health and safety, therefore, focuses on identification of health, as well as safety-related hazards, assessment of risks, and application of controls to eliminate, or minimise, the risks.

Driven by moral, legal and economic considerations, health and safety at work has come to play a vital role for individuals, as well as employers. It is both a moral and a legal obligation on the part of the management of a company to provide suitable conditions for work, and to exercise due diligence to prevent injury or ill health of all persons at work.

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Foreword

This pocket guide is for all those who wish to develop and implement an effective occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system based on OHSAS 18001. Standards often carry a formality about them, with each word bearing a specific meaning and context. They define requirements on 'what' must be done, without prescribing any specific details or methodology on 'how' it may be accomplished. This pocket guide is, therefore, an attempt to demystify the OHSAS 18001 standard, by presenting its contents and implementation methodology in a simple, user-friendly and easily understandable manner.

This guide is ideal for managers, auditors, trainers and OH&S professionals who are involved in any aspect of an OHSAS 18001-based management system – may it be its development, implementation, training or auditing. The guide follows a hands-on and step-by-step approach. It explains the purpose and the requirements of each clause, and goes on to describe how these requirements may be fulfilled by an organisation. It includes numerous examples, suggestions, sample formats and sample procedures, to facilitate understanding and implementation, even by those individuals who may not have a previous background to this subject.

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His work experience in engineering and management includes 16 years of working as an independent consultant, auditor, and trainer for ISO9001, OHSAS 18001 and ISO14001 standards.

Naeem has presented a number of papers in national conferences on management system standards, and has provided consultancy, training and auditing support to over 100 organisations. As a freelance writer, he is a regular contributor to national newspapers on safety, environment and social issues.

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CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS OHSAS 18001?

OHSAS (Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series) 18000 is an international occupational health and safety management system specification. OHSAS comprises of two parts, 18001 and 18002, and embraces a number of other publications. It is intended to help an organisation to control and manage its occupational health and safety risks.

OHSAS 18001 was jointly developed by a number of world-leading national standards bodies, certification bodies and specialist organisations, in response to a widespread demand for a recognised assessment and certification standard.

Like most other management system standards, OHSAS 18001 is designed on the principle of the Plan-Do-Check-Improve (PDCI) cycle. Planning for hazard identification, risk assessment and determination of controls, is a core requirement of an OH&S system. The standard makes it clear that the requirements of occupational health and safety apply to all activities, and all personnel who work for, or on behalf of, the organisation.

CHAPTER 2: OH&S MANAGEMENT SYSTEM GENERAL REQUIREMENTS (CLAUSE 4.1)

Clause 4.1 of OHSAS 18001 follows an approach which is consistent with most other management system standards, such as ISO9001 and ISO14001. It begins by making a comprehensive statement for establishing, documenting, implementing, maintaining and continually improving a management system, based on all the requirements stated in Clause 4 of OHSAS 18001.

These requirements are mandatory for any organisation that wants to control its OH&S risks and improve its OH&S performance. The standard follows the classic PDCA approach (establish, document, implement, maintain and improve), and unlike many other standards, it has no clauses on which an organisation may seek an exemption.

An organisation could be any company, corporation or enterprise, regardless of its size, which has its own functions and administration.

CHAPTER 3: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY (CLAUSE 4.2)

The OH&S policy is a statement that describes the overall intention, vision and direction of an organisation, relating to its OH&S performance. It is formally expressed by the organisation's top management, to reflect its commitment to protect health and safety of all personnel, to comply with all applicable laws, and to continually improve the OH&S performance of the organisation.

Summary of requirements

Establish an OH&S policy that includes:

- 1 Top management's commitment to prevention of injury and ill health, as well as continual improvement of its OH&S performance.
- 2 Commitment to comply with all regulatory and other applicable OH&S requirements.
- 3 A basis for setting OH&S objectives.

The OH&S policy must be approved, documented, periodically reviewed, and made available to all interested parties. (The intention here is to ensure that individuals are aware of their OH&S obligations.)

How can these requirements be met by an organisation?

Putting together an OH&S policy is essentially the responsibility of top management, who must take the following steps in order to meet the requirements of this clause of the standard:

- 1 Identify the nature and scale of hazards and risks that are associated with the organisation's occupational activities.
- 2 Define, document and approve an occupational health and safety policy that reflects top management's vision and commitment for prevention of injury and ill health. Within the OH&S policy, top management must also state their commitment to comply with all applicable regulatory OH&S requirements, as well as a commitment to continually improve the organisation's OH&S performance. This could be done by describing the parameters, or the direction along which the continual improvement of OH&S performance is visualised. These directions can also become the basis for setting, and reviewing, an organisation's OH&S objectives.
- 3 Communicate the OH&S policy (after approval by top management) to all individuals within the organisation, along with their OH&S roles and responsibilities. An organisation could choose many methods to communicate its OH&S policy. These could include training sessions on policies and procedures, video messages, posters displayed at prominent locations, ongoing briefings,

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newsletters, e-mails, etc. The organisation must ensure that the language used for communicating its OH&S policy and procedures is easily understandable by all personnel.

- 4 Having defined and communicated its OH&S policy, the organisation must periodically review the policy for suitability and effectiveness. 'Management review' is one such platform which is normally used for review of OH&S policy. The frequency of review is a decision that must be made by an organisation itself.

An example occupational health and safety policy of Safe & Sound Inc. (SSI)

SSI believes in caring for the health and safety of all its employees, as well as other personnel who work for, or on behalf of, SSI. We commit to proactively work towards:

- Assessing the occupational health and safety risks, and to take steps to prevent injury and ill health to all personnel.
- Ensuring compliance to all applicable occupational health and safety regulatory requirements, as well as any other requirement to which SSI subscribes.
- Continually improving our OH&S management system, by setting and achieving higher performance goals. This shall include the reduction of OH&S incidents, providing a

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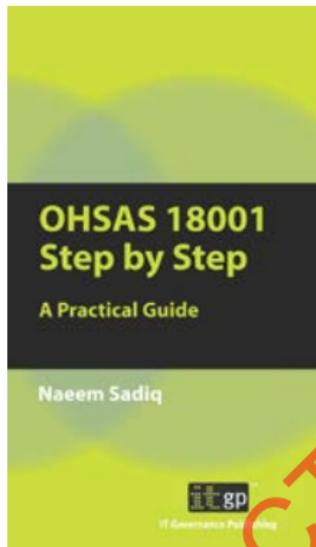
healthy work environment and moving towards becoming a zero injury organisation.

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OHSAS 18001 Step by Step: A Practical Guide



- Explains how occupational health and safety (OH&S) objectives can be determined and established, enabling readers to apportion responsibility and accountability as appropriate.

“I found this to be an excellent book and good value for money. I recommend it to anyone who is trying to implement a management system.”

K H Maddox

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