

Work Health & Safety Auditing

Work health and safety auditing is a systematic, ongoing and periodic review of the entire occupational health and safety management system, including the policy and programs used to promote WH&S and prevent workplace accidents/incidents and work related illnesses.

Audits are conducted to determine the effectiveness of management systems and to identify the strengths and opportunities for improvements, with the initial health and safety audit can be used to establish standards against which future audits can be measured. A WH&S audit will also provide an objective outlook of the status of occupational health and safety management within the workplace.

1. Legislative Compliance Audits

These types of audits can be specific and undertaken to determine if workplace practices are meeting legislative requirements. Compliance audits are conducted to ensure the workplace meets the requirements of the Queensland *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, Codes of Practice and Australian Standards. A compliance audit will identify hazards, unsafe work practices and procedures, and systems of work do not meet legislated standards.

The hazards addressed during a legislative compliance audit are determined by the workplace environment along with information obtained from specific training, relevant injury data and industry input. The outcomes of legislative compliance audits conducted give results that indicate if compliance is being achieved or if further actions are required to meet legislative standards.

2. Hazard Specific Audits

Hazard specific audits address particular issues such as lifting of beer kegs, or using hazardous substances, and involve the inspection and testing of current workplace control methods. This type of audit has a narrow focus and looks at the effectiveness of policies and procedures in dealing with specific hazards. These audits differ from compliance audits in that the standards set by the workplace to address a risk of injury may exceed legislative requirements.

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* doesn't mandate a formal hazard based assessment of the workplace but expects inspections to be done. The QHA can undertake a 'snapshot' assessment using the criteria operating under the previous legislation and approved by

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. There are eight common elements referred to under this criterion and includes general workplace hazards:

1. Hazard identification, risk assessment and control
2. Work environment
3. Noise
4. Plant
5. Electrical
6. Hazardous substances
7. Manual tasks
8. Information, instruction, training and supervision

3. Management System Audits

Management systems audits have a wider scope, and although addressing hazards and risk controls, it also looks at workplace structures, planning activities, responsibilities, implemented procedures, review cycles and measurement and evaluation issues. The management system, as such, is a planned, documented and verifiable method of managing WH&S hazards. What makes it a system is the deliberate linking and flow of processes that creates an intentional way of managing WH&S matters. A basic occupational health and safety management system has some of the following characteristics:

- Existence of a health and safety policy that is communicated to staff;
- Management commitment;
- Allocation of responsibilities and accountability for health and safety matters;
- Controls for suppliers, sub-contractors and purchasing;
- Health and safety consultation;
- Hazard identification, evaluation and control;
- Provision of information and training of staff;
- Incident recording, investigation, analysis and review; and
- Measuring and evaluating work health and safety performance.

Many workplaces undertake these audits on an annual basis as the amount of resources and time required to conduct a management systems audit can be substantial.