

OSH Management Standards

Organisations worldwide recognise the need to control and improve health and safety performance, and often do so with either formal or informal occupational safety and health management systems (OSHMS) or occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS). However, before 2000 there was a proliferation of national standards and proprietary certification schemes to choose from. This caused confusion and fragmentation in the market; undermined the credibility of each individual scheme; and potentially created trade barriers. Recognising this, the national and international standards-setting bodies began the development of OSH management standards. The main ones are:

BS OHSAS 18001:2007

BSI Group led the development of formal OHS (Occupational Health and Safety) management systems since 1999. The OHS Series consisted of two specifications: 18001 provided requirements for an OHS management system and 18002 gave implementation guidelines. [BS OHSAS 18001](#) was adopted as a British standard in 2007 and the updated guidance specification was adopted as [BS OHSAS 18002](#) in 2008.

- BS OHSAS 18001 specifies requirements for an OH&S management system to help an organisation develop and implement a policy and objectives, which take into account legal requirements and information about OH&S risks. It applies to all types and sizes of organisations and accommodates diverse geographical, cultural and social conditions.
- BS OHSAS 18002 provides generic assistance for establishing, implementing or improving an OH&S management system, and demonstrates successful implementation of BS OHSAS 18001.

The standards are not legally binding and were developed as a result of demands for certification. They can be aligned with existing ISO 9001 (quality management) and ISO 14001 (environmental management) systems. Many organizations look at implementing all three standards at the same time which can be cost-effective and minimises disruption. The standards can be integrated using a standard such as BSI's PAS 99.

ILO Guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems (ILO-OSH 2001)

These Guidelines were developed by the ILO with tripartite consensus involving worker, employer and government representatives and may be applied on two levels - national and organisational. At the national level, they provide for the establishment of a national framework for occupational safety and health (OSH) management systems, preferably supported by national laws and regulations. They also provide precise information on developing voluntary arrangements to strengthen compliance with regulations and standards, which, in turn, lead to continual improvement of OSH performance. At the organisational level, the Guidelines encourage the integration of OSH management system elements as an important component of overall policy and management arrangements. They are not legally binding and are not intended to replace national laws, regulations or accepted standards. As well as employer involvement, they particularly provide for worker participation at all stages of the process. Their application does not require certification.

Why OSH management standards are relevant to business

Business interests fall largely into three groups in their views on the need for Management Systems

- Businesses who consider that there is no need for third party involvement or increased bureaucratic demands in running their operations and organisations
- Businesses who decide that certification to certain standards gives them competitive advantage and reassurance to their customers and other stakeholders
- Consultancies who recognise a major business opportunity to provide services to organisations

Efficient businesses operate within some form of management system whether they are formal and certified or developed in-house, informal and not certified. SMEs often operate within systems that they have developed to suit their own needs. However the globalisation of operations and supply chains means that accountability and process, product and service integrity needs to be established and demonstrated and certification to management systems is seen as one way of demonstrating this. Management systems that are aligned to existing successful business operations can be implemented at least cost and are most effective, although many businesses report that the journey to implement management systems has motivated analysis and review of working procedures and revealed potential for increased interest, engagement and improvements.

The IOE position on OSH management standards

The IOE position is that there should be no compulsion within management systems linking them to legal compliance or license to operate; as such systems can be bureaucratic and costly. If business system integrity can be established without such bureaucracy, then this should be acceptable. If businesses wish to institute management systems and be certified to them, then they should recognise a clear business case to do so.

How does IOE work on OSH management systems advance the agenda for business?

The IOE will provide the business voice directly to ISO and support their members in doing so at country level, to ensure that a balanced view of the needs of enterprises is recognised and that any management standard should be pragmatic and realistic for businesses and does not just reflect the interests of consultants.

To ensure that this initiative does not reopen the market confusion, question the credibility of individual schemes and create trade barriers, the IOE believes that international developments should be aligned or able to be integrated with established management systems and should not have a compulsory certification element.

For more Information and Answers to your Questions

Please visit the [Occupational Safety and Health](#) sections of our website www.ioe-emp.org. If you do not find what you are looking for, please contact the IOE's Adviser on OSH Pierre Vincensini: vincensini@ioe-emp.com or call +41 22 929 00 15.

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