Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series 18001 (OHSAS 18001)

Topic: Standards, Health and Safety

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Introduction

The impact of one's operation on the health and safety of employees, visitors and contractors should not be underestimated. In line with South African laws, all workers and any other person present on a workplace are entitled to a workplace which is safe and sound. Employees and contractors alike should not be expected to perform any actions or duties where that person's health and safety is compromised.

Non-compliance with health and safety standards can have devastating consequences in the form of accidents, loss or life and injury. For this reason, various health and safety laws have been brought into operation around the word to regulate and control the impact of industrial and business processes on a person's safety and health in the working environment.

In South Africa, there are a number of health and safety laws which specifically regulate and control business and other related impacts on a person's health and safety. In order to give effect to these laws, various management systems and procedures have been developed over the years to assist an organisation to implement and comply with these health and safety laws, standards and codes of practice.

Objectives of OHSAS

The aim of OHSAS 18001 is to assist organisations in managing and controlling their health and safety risks and improving their occupational health and safety performance. In response to customer demand for an occupational health and safety management system that can be assessed objectively, certified credibly and recognised internationally the Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series (OHSAS) standards are developed for use by all types of organisations and industries.

By controlling the occupational health and safety risks that are consistent with their occupational health and safety policy and objectives, organisations can achieve and demonstrate sound health and safety performance and stewardship.

By having a clearly defined Health and Safety management system in place to identify and control health and safety risks, organisations are able to minimise risks to their

workforce and visitors or external contractors on their premises. The standard allows organisations to put in place processes for continually reviewing and improving occupational health and safety.

Achieving a structured health and safety management system throughout the organisation will demonstrate one's commitment to the welfare of one's staff and external parties. It will provide a framework to implement the OHSAS 18001 requirements and a process for continual improvement.

Application of OHSAS 18001 and its implication to Tourism

OHSAS 18001 is suitable for all types of organizations, including tourism-related companies operating in the hospitality sectors who aim to become more efficient in managing health and safety and reducing accidents in their place of business.

By setting up systems that are assessed by a third party certification body, organisations will prove to their staff, suppliers and customers that they take health and safety seriously. OHSAS 18001 accreditation provides a framework to help organisations meet their legal obligations in terms of health and safety in the workplace.

The implementation and application of an OHSAS standard is not compulsory.

Fundamentally, it is everyone's job to support and protect a safe and healthy workplace by preventing injury, preventing ill health, reducing hazards and continually improving the occupational health and safety performance. Furthermore, organisations are becoming increasingly concerned about achieving sound health and safety performance, often while delivering cost savings and demonstrating good stewardship and good corporate citizenship.

Therefore, many organisations have elected to implement OHSAS 18001 and obtain registration because it assures employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, regulators and the community at large that the company has an internationally recognised Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) in place. An organisation with an effective health and safety system will typically have safer and healthier workplaces, comply with regulations and meet customer expectations better than an organisation that does not have an effective OHSMS. Many organisations require their suppliers to have OHSAS 18001 Registration.

Summary of the provisions of the Standard

The OHS Standard

OHSAS 18001:2007 is an international standard that is developed by the OHSAS Project Group, an association that includes government agencies, certification bodies, national standards, industry associations and consultants.

The British Standards Institution (BSI) currently provides the Secretariat of the OHSAS Project Group.

The family of OHSAS standard is relatively small and is made up of two main standards:
- OHSAS 18001:2007, Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems Requirements; and
- OHSAS 18002:2008, Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems Guidelines for the implementation of OHSAS 18001:2007.

Benefits of OHSAS 18001

An effective health and safety management system can provide benefits to one's entity and customers and give one a competitive advantage by
- minimising the risks of production delays;
- providing a safe environment in which to do business; and
- demonstrating your commitment to maintain an effective health and safety policy.

Other benefits include making one's organisation more efficient, enabling it to meet its legal requirements and improving staff morale by making the workplace a safer environment in which to work.

Benefits to the organisation include–
- improving one's reputation and increasing one's opportunities to gain new business;
- minimising risks of downtime through accidents;
- demonstrating one's commitment to meet legal obligations;
- possible cost savings from public liability insurance premiums;
- maintaining compliance with legal requirements; and
- providing a robust system to maintain and continually improve health and safety.

Implementation of the OHSAS 18001 Standard

An organisation, before it can become OHSAS 18001 accredited, must contract with an external service provider who will, over a period of time, implement the OHSAS 18001 management system on behalf of the entity.

Once this is done, another third party service provider will have to be contracted to assess whether the OHSAS 18001 quality management system is acceptable and complies with the international standard.

If the findings are favourable, the entity will achieve OHSAS 18001 accreditation. This is made up of a series of steps or stages.

The first stage will be to assess all areas of your organisation to identify the various processes carried out by the organisation and the risks and hazards which may have an impact or a potential impact on the health and safety of employees and others. The person implementing the system will ascertain from this assessment whether current controls are effective or need review.

Some of the main areas they will assess are–
- site activities;
- risks and accidents;
- work instructions and processes;
- documentation compliance;
- documentation management;
- procedures and controls in place;

- regulatory requirements;
- preventive and corrective measures;
- recording of information;
- management reviews of the system; and
- staff awareness and training.

Once this is done, the next step will be to implement the system. This will take a period of time and will involve a great amount of consultation with all persons in the workplace. Once the system has been implemented, the next stage is an audit to check whether the management system has been correctly implemented and whether processes are being followed and documentation is kept up to date.

During the audit, assessments are based on the following–
- documentation control;
- records being kept;
- staff and management conformance to the system;
- how the system is working in each area of the organisation;
- staff training necessary to meet the requirements;
- management systems in place;
- planning and risk assessment;
- staff training and awareness;
- communication of safety management systems;
- response to emergency situations; and
- monitoring and continual improvement.

⚠ WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO NOT COMPLY?

The implementation and application of an OHSAS standard is not compulsory.

A workplace that is not safe and does not conform to standards that promote good health could result in injuries, ill health, an increase in hazards and a decline in employees' overall health and safety and, therefore, performance. Non-compliance with health and safety laws, standards and procedures will negatively impact on employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, regulators and the community at large and could give rise to fines, penalties and even imprisonment.

A further consequence of not having an accredited system in place could be loss of support and patronage from customers, suppliers and related stakeholders.

☑ **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS OR CONTROLS WHICH SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE TARGET AUDIENCE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARD**

An organisation that wishes to comply with the standards should:

- Contract with an external service provider who will implement the OHSAS 18001 management system on behalf of the entity over a period of time; and
- Contract with a third party service provider to assess whether the OHSAS 18001 management system is acceptable and complies with international standards.

The organisation will then be issued with a certificate to confirm its OHSAS 18001 management system accreditation. This certificate may be displayed at its place of business.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Regulator
International Organisation for Standardisation

Website
www.iso.org