

R_{OSP}A

accidents don't have to happen

Health & Safety Audits e-book



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Safety audits with impact:

2. Definitions

The Health and Safety Executive define safety audits as:

“The systematic examination to determine whether activities and related results conform to planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable for achieving the organisation’s policy and objectives”

This next definition comes courtesy of the HSE Manual Handling Operations Regulations (MHOR). The act sets out a clear ranking of measures for dealing with risks from manual handling, these are:

“The collection of independent information on the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the total health and safety management system and drawing up plans for corrective action.”

How would you define a safety audit?

Safety audits with impact

2. Why have an audit?

Safety audits are an essential part of a successful business. Effective health and safety auditing not only provides the legal framework for compliance, it also lays the foundations for continuous safety improvement to enhance competitive advantage. The main duty of any health and safety auditor is to look at your organisation's safety management systems and assess them in line with the chosen criteria.

Whilst an audit is used to assess Health and Safety management systems, it is important to view an audit as a positive – it's a chance to highlight company successes and an opportunity to praise staff for their excellent work.

Why audit?

- To comply with legislation?
- Because it is the right thing to do?
- To assess whether your H&S management system is working?

Safety audits with impact

3. RoSPA's reasons

There are multiple reasons for carrying out a safety audit. Most people would (quite correctly) state that it is a legal requirement, however it is arguably equally important to do so for moral and ethical reasons. It ensures that the systems you have in place are working efficiently and are fit for purpose. It also helps to identify areas for improvement and potential weaknesses within the organisation. It is no coincidence that when the HSE conduct their investigations into major accidents, it usually highlights health and safety management failures as being the root of the cause.

Overall, an audit demonstrates that the management are committed to the health and welfare of employees, customers and all other stakeholders.

RoSPA's reasons

- Essential feature of successful health and safety management systems
- Control systems weaken over time and need to be constantly reviewed
- Facilitates planned improvements to the safety management system
- Helps improve skills and identify weaknesses in human resources
- Demonstrates management commitment to employees, health and safety committee members and other stakeholders

Safety audits with impact

4. How do we scope an audit?

There are three essential elements needed to evidence a successful audit. Firstly, you need to have the correct documentation in place; up-to-date Health and Safety policies, process documents, suitable arrangements for harmful substances etc.

Secondly are the interviews with managers and heads of departments. Auditors need to speak to these people at suitable times. These interviews ask “is it in place?”

Finally, there is the evidence. Are the policies and processes being carried out? Here, the auditor will talk to the people on the ‘shop floor’ and find out the actual processes being carried out. In some cases, staff will actually be using better methods, so it is important to pick up on these, as well as identifying areas where processes are not being carried out.

Of course there are many elements to consider when planning an audit:

Scoping

- What are the aims and objectives?
- Qualitative or quantitative?
- One site or multi site?
- Rolling audit
- Who is in the team?
- How many days?
- Internal or external?
- Independent
- SMART

Getting audits right:

1. Internal vs. External

There are two potential routes to auditing your organisation. The first method is to train an employee to become your internal safety auditor, alternatively an external auditor could be appointed to conduct this safety audit. Naturally enough there are pros and cons to each method. Let's look firstly at an **Internal audit**:

Pros

- Organisations can view the auditor as a 'management instrument' in developing performance standards and getting working procedures into place
- Your trained auditor will have greater understanding of how your organisation operates
- Internal auditors are given more freedom to help with suggestions and will highlight what sort of action is necessary
- The audit can be carried out in segments, which also allows it to be flexible and minimise disruption within your organisation
- More cost effective in the longer run

Cons

- Little or no experience in conducting health and safety audits – we recommend that auditors have the [NEBOSH Diploma](#) or the [NEBOSH certificate](#)
- Internal audit reports are not accepted by either shareholders or tax authorities
- Audit may be biased and therefore organisations cannot depend on such reports
- If the audit is not conducted by a professional auditor, there could be a higher chance of errors not being detected
- Priority may not be given to conducting the audit
- Conflicts may arise

Getting audits right:

1. Internal vs External

You could opt for an external auditor – outsourcing the auditing ensures you will be adhering to the requirement to carry out an 'independent assessment' of your safety management systems as outlined in the Health and Safety Executive's best-practice document (HSG65).

Pros:

- Auditors tend to be Chartered Members of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (CMIOSH) and [OSCHR registered](#)
- Benchmark your organisation against other organisations outside or within your sector
- Can assess your organisation against [OHSAS 18001](#) and [ISO 39001](#)
- Experience of conducting health and safety audits within various industries
- Unbiased and expert recommendations, detailed report
- Your organisation can receive an [auditing award](#) at the same time as the audit is conducted, which will demonstrate the findings from your safety audit

Cons:

- Your organisation needs to allocate staff time and management to the external auditor
- An external auditor does not fully understand how your organisation operates
- An external auditor normally is given a lack of freedom within the organisation that they are visiting
- Can be expensive and time-consuming, however many training and consultancy providers are flexible with their approach to conducting their [safety auditing](#)

Getting audits right:

2. What is OHSAS 18001?

OHSAS 18001 is a British Standard for occupational health and safety management systems. It was created to help organisations demonstrate good occupational health and safety performance and as a result is now seen as one of the world's most recognisable occupational health and safety management systems standards.

So why should your organisation try to meet this standard? This British Standard has a number of benefits such as:

- Helps your organisation create the best possible working conditions for your employees
- Identifies hazards and puts into place controls for your organisation to manage them
- Reduces costs and downtime by reducing workplace accidents and illnesses
- Helps your workforce become more motivated and engage better with one another as your organisation will have safer working conditions
- Demonstrates to your stakeholders that your organisation is compliant

There are 5 key areas to OHSAS 18001 that must be examined by an approved centre.

Turn over to find out more...

Getting audits right:

2. 5 key areas of OHSAS 18001

Occupational health and safety policies:

- What policies are in place?
- Are the policies correct and up-to-date?
- How are the policies communicated?
- Are the policies reviewed regularly?

How your organisation plans in terms of:

- Hazard identifications
- Risk assessments
- Legal and other requirements
- Objectives and programmes

Implementation and operation of:

- Resources, roles, responsibility, accountability & authority
- Competence, training and awareness
- Communication, participation and consultation
- Control of documents & operational control
- Emergency preparedness and response

Checking:

- Performance measurement and monitoring
- Evaluation of compliance
- Incident investigation, non-conformity, corrective & preventive action
- Control of records & internal audit

Management review:

- Results from internal audits and evaluations
- Occupational Health and Safety performance of your organisation
- Have the objectives been met?
- Follow-up actions from previous reviews
- Recommendations for improvements

RoSPA offers a unique added value service: if your organisation does not comply then we can work with you to achieve compliance by advising you on where you are going wrong & helping you put it right.

Getting audits right:

3. Question time

Is a health and safety audit a legal requirement?

The Health and Safety Executive's guidance document HSG65 "Successful Health and Safety Management" *recommends* that audits are undertaken.

Indeed, safety audits are widely accepted to be best practice as they enable organisations to focus resources on areas of need, prioritise actions and facilitate continuous improvement. However, a health and safety audit is not currently a legal necessity.

How many from my current team of auditors should I train for health and safety auditing?

It depends on the size and activities of the individual organisation. The qualifications of the potential auditors also need to be taken into consideration.

For a large, multi-site organisation it may be appropriate to train two or three individuals on the QSA Auditors course.

What audit system will be best for my organisation to start with?

Struggling to find an audit solution to suit you? RoSPA has developed a free [Safety Audit Selection Tool](#) - complete it now and benefit from expert guidance. The selection tool only takes a matter of minutes to complete and will help you to decide which audit system will best suit your organisation's needs.

Take a look at our auditing options:

- [Quality safety audits](#)
- [Health & safety review](#)
- [Audit answer](#)
- [In-house audit system](#)

About RoSPA

RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) is a registered charity and one of the UK's leading safety organisations. Through our [workplace safety training](#), [consultancy](#), [fleet](#), [awards](#) and [membership services](#), we work with organisations within the UK and overseas.

Why choose RoSPA training?

RoSPA offers one of the widest ranges of health and safety training courses and in-company safety training in the UK, from operative level right up to director and board level. We are one of the leading providers of NEBOSH and IOSH accredited courses, manual handling, safer people handling, auditor training and core health and safety training courses, covering a wide range of topics within the areas of risk assessment and the management of occupational safety.

We also lead the way in practical health and safety consultancy and audits. Tailored services provide a service that suits and ensures you're fully compliant and - above all - safe.

Which courses does RoSPA offer?

- [NEBOSH Courses](#)
- [IOSH Courses](#)
- [Safer People Handling](#)
- [Manual Handling](#)
- [Core safety skills](#)
- [Practical skills](#)
- [Auditor training](#)
- [In-company training](#)

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