

Occupational health and safety management systems (ohsms)



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An Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) may be defined as “ a series of processes which provide a framework, for managing occupational health and safety (OHS) responsibilities so that they become more efficient and more integrated into overall business operations, around which good performance can be established and maintained and which will support the development of a safety culture.” (International Labour Organisation (ILO)-British Standards Institution (BSI) Joint-Definition)

The main aim of the OHSM is to design measures to control and eliminate the likelihood of hazards in the workplace and promote a safe work environment.

1. Management commitment

An effective management addresses all work-related hazards and employees' welfare facilities and not only those stipulated by laws. There is a need for management to make the health and safety of workers a priority. It is essential that there be strong management commitment and strong worker participation in the effort to create and maintain a safe and healthy workplace. In each workplace, the lines of responsibility from top to bottom need to be clear, and workers should know who is responsible for different health and safety issues. Management is responsible that the organisation has the appropriate policies, programmes in place to ensure a healthy and safe workplace.

Management commitment and employee involvement

Charles reese (accident) Management commitment and employee are complementary. Management commitment provides the motivating force

and the resources for organizing and controlling activities within an organization. Employee involvement provides the means through which workers develop and/or express their own commitment to safety and health protection, for themselves and for their fellow workers.

Safety and health goals and objectives are also included to assist you in establishing workplace goals and objectives that demonstrate your company's commitment to safety.

2. Health and Safety policy

It is the responsibility of management to cater for the health and safety of its workforce. Clearly developed and concise policies set the direction for the organisation by communicating management's goals and objectives.

A good health and safety policy need to be:

1. Specific to the organisation and appropriate to its size and nature of works;
2. Clearly written so as to educate workers, clients, suppliers and general public about the health and safety policy of the organisation;
3. Specific about the responsibility and accountability of managers and supervisors at all levels;
4. Effectively communicated to all employees; and
5. Reviewed on a regular basis to ensure continuing sustainability.

The best health and safety policies align health and safety with human resources management as employees are the key resource of an organization. (HSE Successful Health and Safety Management HS(G) HMSO 1997)

The OSH policy should include, as a minimum, the following key principles and objectives to which the organization is committed:

1. protecting the safety and health of all members of the organization by preventing work-related injuries, ill health, diseases and incidents;
2. complying with relevant OSH national laws and regulations, voluntary programmes, collective agreements on OSH and other requirements to which the organization subscribes;
3. ensuring that workers and their representatives are consulted and encouraged to participate actively in all elements of the OSH management system; and
4. continually improving the performance of the OSH management system.

(ILO Guidelines on the Occupational Health and Safety Management System 2001)

Health promotion in the workplace

This complements occupational health and safety measures to improve the well being of workers at the workplace.

Workplace wellbeing

According to ILO, it relates to all aspects of working life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organisation.

Workers' well being is directly related to the productivity of the organisation.

The higher the workers' well being, the higher will be the productivity of the organisation.

Safety tasks and responsibilities

Health and Safety audit and Performance review

Health and Safety audit and performance review are the final steps in the health and safety management.

Health and Safety culture

In order to develop good health and safety practices, a good health and safety culture is needed at work. Employers need to incorporate health and safety practices in their day to day running of the business. Successful occupational health and safety practices necessitates the collaboration and participation of both employers/owners or management and employees in health and safety programmes, and it involves the consideration of issues relating to occupational medicine, industrial hygiene, toxicology, education, engineering safety, ergonomics, psychology, etc. Both workers and employers have a legal responsibility to look after health and safety at work together. Workers who contribute to health and safety at work, are safer and healthier than those who do not.

Building and maintain a health and safety culture involve the use of all available means to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the concepts of hazards and risks and how they may be prevented or controlled.

“ The safety culture of an organization is the product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organisation’s health and safety management.” – Successful Health and Safety Management by HSE (2nd edition), pg 22

Training for health and safety

Training means educating people on what should be done and not, how it should be done and when it should be done.

Based on a survey carried out by ILO, workers often experience work-related health problems but do not realize that the problems are related to their work, particularly when an occupational disease, for example, is in the early stages. Hence, there is a need to train workers on safe way to do the job, hazards associated with the work and how to eliminate or control them.

It is also important to train workers how to react in case of emergencies, like a fire outbreak. Training on first aid is also important.

Training can be conducted at different levels:

1. During induction course for new employees where they can be educated on how to work safely and also about the hazards and risks associated with the jobs, how to eliminate or control them.

2. Training can be organized for management and Supervisors so that they know what are the hazards present in the workplace and this enable them to develop policies to combat these hazards
3. Regular training to existing employees, to update them on new equipment and technologies being used.

Health surveillance

Health surveillance at work is very important. It is performed to look for early signs of ill health caused by substances and other hazards at work. It includes keeping health records for individuals and may include medical examinations and testing of blood or urine samples, so that corrective action can be taken.

Health and Safety Committee

Health and safety programs

For all of the reasons given above, it is crucial that employers, workers and unions are committed to health and safety and that:

- workplace hazards are controlled – at the source whenever possible;
- records of any exposure are maintained for many years;
- both workers and employers are informed about health and safety risks in the workplace;
- there is an active and effective health and safety committee that includes both workers and management;
- worker health and safety efforts are ongoing.

Charles D. Reese (2001) Accident/Incident Prevention Techniques – In order to effectively manage safety and health, a company must pay attention to some critical factors:

1. policy of management regarding health and safety of workers
2. health and safety goals of the company
3. who is responsible for occupational safety and health
4. how are supervisors and employees held accountable for job safety and health?
5. what are the consequences of not following the safety rules
6. are there set procedures for addressing safety and health at the workplace?

A written safety and health program is of primary importance in addressing these items.