

Before you begin:

Review your organization's safety practices. Find out if your organization has a documented safety management system (SMS) in place. If you do not have a SMS, the following points can help you get started.



Introduction

A SMS is an integrated, documented process that outlines how an organization intends to develop and meet its safety objectives. It is a top-down, organization-wide approach to managing safety risk and assuring the effectiveness of safety risk controls. A SMS should capture the full breadth of your safety efforts. However, it does not contain the details for implementing each safety objective. Instead, supporting documents and programs, many of which may already exist in your organization, maintain those details.

The value of a SMS is that it provides:

- A comprehensive view of the safety effort
- A linkage among different essential elements
- A means of keeping the organization on track and moving in the same direction
- A consistent method of managing and improving the safety efforts

Your SMS is a map for achieving safety excellence. It must be a journey you and your organization are willing to take and can make. You should tailor a SMS to meet your organization's specific needs. Merely adopting someone else's system invites a poor fit.

There are several SMS models that an organization can use to build the system framework: OHSAS 18001, ISO 45001, ANSI/ASSP Z10, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) or Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP).

SMSs are built on the ideas that:

- People need to drive change to reduce risks and promote a positive safety culture
- Planning for the changes that will drive safety throughout the organization
- Development and maintenance of safety programs will lead the organization to compliance and continuous improvement
- Measurement of performance drives continuous improvement

Definitions

Safety management system: an integrated, documented process that outlines how an organization intends to develop and meet its safety objectives; also known as a safety and health management system or safety and health management program.

Safety hazard: the potential to cause harm, including ill-health and injury, damage to property, plant, products or the environment, production losses or increased liabilities.

Discussion

Gather a group to discuss the creation of a SMS for your organization. First, there must be a consensus decision that a SMS is appropriate. For a SMS to be effective, your organization must be willing to bring all safety efforts under one umbrella and use it to drive safety improvements. One of the primary benefits of a documented system is that it keeps everyone moving in the same direction. If the consensus has not yet developed, a system approach will not be effective.

Second, the self-assessment process should be well under way for a clear picture of where the organization wants to go. The SMS provides the documented framework of your efforts. However, the vision of your destination comes from the self-assessment process. Only when this is clear are you ready to create a SMS.

Next, you should examine existing policies and programs to determine where they fit within the organization's essential elements. Use the self-assessment to perform a gap analysis to identify missing or weak policies, procedures and programs that need reinforcement or development. Existing programs that may be incorporated into the SMS and will need to be included in the gap analysis:

- Safety committees
- Safety procedures such as lockout-tagout, hazard communication, and confined space entry
- Emergency action and fire prevention plans
- Safety audits, both internal and third-party audits
- Emergency drills and exercises
- Elements from other management systems such as document control and system audit

Finally, instill a departmental and organizational discipline to use the SMS once you complete it. You can achieve this by implementing an accountability system that starts at the top management level and continues down to the supervisor level. The system needs to be periodically audited to ensure that the system is being implemented and maintained as prescribed. Before initiating a SMS, be sure commitment and leadership is in place so that the necessary resources are allocated to the development and on-going SMS maintenance.

OHSAS 18001 & ISO 45001

A more formal approach to SMSs has been the implementation of the OHSAS 18001 program. OHSAS 18001 is now replaced by ISO 45001, the new international standard for occupational health and safety. Organizations already certified to OHSAS 18001 should upgrade to ISO 45001.

The new standard helps organizations design occupational health programs and SMSs to their workplace in a more effective manner. The requirements for ISO 45001 are process-oriented instead of procedure-focused. This allows your organization to develop a SMS that addresses the specific risks for your workplace.

ISO 45001 creates a SMS that focuses on specific areas including:

1. Normative References – references to other standards and ISO programs within your organization
2. Context of the Organization – why the organization exists and both internal and external influences to be considered
3. Leadership – commitment and involvement related to SMS
4. Planning – identifying risks and setting objectives
5. Support – systems in place to achieve goals and sustain a strong safety and health program
6. Operations – focuses on the hierarchy of controls, outsourcing, and working with contractors
7. Performance Evaluation – how to measure and monitor progress
8. Improvement – processes to continually evaluate and make progress towards bettering safety and health within the company

While this is a brief overview of the ISO 45001 program, it provides clear areas your organization can focus on as you develop your SMS.

Conclusion

A SMS provides your organization with a systematic method to improve safety that is integrated into everyday processes. By implementing a SMS approach to safety, your organization can realize decreased injury rates, improved safety culture, and overall impact to your bottom line.

Group Activity

Have the group consider and discuss the items below needed for developing and implementing a SMS.

1. Determine the makeup of a multidisciplinary team with experience in operations, engineering, administration, and safety and health.
2. Develop plans to design and implement program elements that have been identified as weaknesses or gaps.
3. Identify measures to track progress toward total implementation.
4. Determine how to conduct periodic reassessments of the SMS to identify opportunities for improved performance.
5. Identify action steps for achieving a functional SMS.

Resources

[ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety](#)

[OSHA, Recommended practices for safety and health programs](#)

[BWC Learning Center](#), search for: Safety and Health Management Programs (Online)