





Occupational Health and Safety Management system according to OHSAS 18001

Prevention will be considered to have been integrated into the management and performance of any activity if its execution procedure has been determined and is applied with due abidance by the established «preventive requisites» (and not only the production requisites) and if the individuals intervening in the management and performance thereof are in due possession of the necessary training and information for fulfilling their duties.

MAPFRE SERVICIO DE PREVENCIÓN



The benchmark legislation on the Prevention of Occupational Risks stipulates that the preventive activity should be knitted into the whole firm's structure, from top to bottom, guaranteeing the positive result of its implementation and allowing an objective assessment to be made of its degree of effectiveness. This implies a systematisation of the way of working, defining the characterising features thereof that safeguard the health of the firm's workers.

By law firms are bound to set up a management system for controlling any risk workers may be exposed to and safeguarding their health. It does not stipulate what this system must be like, but in recent times the one that has been most successful and, *ipso facto*, most often used is the OHSAS 18000 System, which, paradoxically, does not have the status of an ISO standard.



THE OHSAS STANDARDS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OH&S) AIM TO FURNISH ORGANISATIONS WITH THE ELEMENTS OF AN EFFICIENT OH&S MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND TO HELP ORGANISATIONS ACHIEVE ECONOMIC AND OH&S OBJECTIVES

To fully grasp what this management system implies, we first need to clear up some concepts.

I. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ACCORDING TO OHSAS 18001 AND 18002

- **SYSTEM:** A set of elements (means or resources) which act and interrelate in pursuit of an object.
- **MANAGEMENT OF AN ACTIVITY:** This implies its planning, organisation and control of its execution to achieve the desired object (with efficient use of available resources).
- **PROCEDURE (written or otherwise):** Is understood as a specified way of carrying out an activity: what should be done, how should it be done, when should it be done, who should do it,...
- **PROCESS:** To facilitate management thereof, the various activities making up an activity, more or less complex, can be grouped into processes, convergent or concatenated, the latter being, therefore, a set of successive phases of a specific activity or several activities.
- **COMPANY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** Every firm has an object and carries out an overall activity in its pursuit; the system set up to manage this activity (normally complex) is called the company management system.
- **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** Is that part of the company's management system responsible for safeguarding workers' health and controlling working conditions to ensure that said conditions do not pose an unacceptable risk for said workers.

The efficacy of preventive activities is

conditional upon their integration into the overall organisation of the company. In 1977, when the Prevention Services Regulation (*Reglamento de los Servicios de Prevención*) was passed, its article 1, laid it down that: «The prevention of occupational risks, as an activity to be carried out within the firm, shall be integrated into its whole set of activities and decisions ... Integration of prevention into all the various levels of the firm, from top to bottom, involves across-the-board acceptance of the obligation of including risk prevention in any activity carried out, directly or indirectly, and in all decisions taken».

And it goes on:

«...prevention shall be integrated into the technical processes, into the work organisation arrangements and into the conditions under which this work is performed».

Act 54/03 for Reforming the Legislative Framework of Occupational Risk Prevention (*Ley de Reforma del Marco Normativo de Prevención de*

Riesgos Laborales) clearly and repeatedly expresses among its objectives the reinforcement of the integration of the preventive activity as a whole. Article 16, for example, among many others, lays it down in its section 1 that:

«The prevention of occupational risks has to be integrated into the company's general management system, throughout the whole set of its activities and at all levels thereof, by implementing and enforcing an occupational risks prevention plan...».

The OHSAS standards on the management of occupational health and safety (OH&S) aim to furnish organisations with the elements of an efficient OH&S management system, which can be knitted into the other management requisites, and to help organisations achieve economic and OH&S objectives.

OHSAS specifies the requisites for an OH&S management system, enabling any organisation to draw up and implement a policy, and also establishes some objectives that take into account legal requisites and information on the risks posed for OH&S. It aims to be applicable to all types and sizes of organisations, including small and medium-sized firms, whatever their activity may be.





The success of the system depends on across-the-board commitment throughout the whole organisation, especially among senior management. A system of this type allows organisations to set up an OH&S policy, establish objectives and processes for achieving the aims of this policy, take the necessary actions for improving their performance and demonstrate the conformity and efficacy of the management system. The success of this system depends on across-the-board commitment throughout the whole organisation, especially among senior management.

The OHSAS 18000 management system is a management tool based on the methodology known as PDCA (plan-do-check-act):

- **Plan:** Establish the objectives and processes necessary to deliver results in due accordance with the organisation's OH&S policy.
- **Do:** Implement the processes.
- **Check:** Monitor and measure the processes against the OH&S policy, the objectives, goals and legal requisites and other requisites, reporting on the results.
- **Act:** Take actions for ongoing improvement of the performance of the OH&S management system.

The OHSAS standard contains requisites that can be objectively audited; nonetheless it does not lay down absolute requisites for OH&S performance over and above the commitments included in the OH&S policy, of compliance with the applicable legal requisites and the other requisites that the organisation subscribes to for safeguarding its workers' health and ensuring continuous improvement.

In sum:

- Integration of the prevention of occupational risks within any organisation aims to encourage a proactive and responsible attitude towards health and safety at all levels of the firm, with the participation of all its personnel in preventive tasks and in the management of the risk itself, the adoption of preventive and corrective measures and the promotion of safe attitudes and behaviour as part and parcel of a process of ongoing improvement. The OHSAS standard acts as a tool for managing the preventive activity and achieving these goals in a structured and satisfactory way.
- The OHSAS standard provides a model of a proactive system for managing health and safety in the workplace. As a minimum requisite this is to be done with due abidance by the law and then with additional observance of any other requisites that the firm itself has undertaken to fulfil. It defines an organisational structure (functions and responsibilities), the planning of the preventive activity, the processes, procedures, necessary resources, records,... for drawing up and implementing in an objectively audited manner a health and safety policy approved by company management and all members thereof. This policy will then be periodically reviewed as part of a continuous improvement process.

Once the management handbook has been defined and approved it has to be implemented. All



members of the organisation are bound to familiarise themselves with the risk management system to ensure that the preventive culture imbues all their daily activities, each according to the level of his or her skills. They then have to carry out the preventive activity, watching out for correct operation of the system and making sure it keeps pace with working conditions as they change over time. This will involve setting up various training sessions for the whole organisation, each one planned to suit their established OH&S responsibilities and activities. The system also has to

be periodically checked to vet its efficiency and ensure that the established principles and procedures are actually being followed.

Finally, the organisation may wish to have the OH&S management system objectively assessed and certified by an impartial and independent body. This external assessment of the system offers the organisation several advantages: certification by the labour authority of the integration of prevention and legal compliance with its responsibilities; eligibility for reductions in some insurance premiums related to this matter; it enhances the company's image among its clients and the whole society and improves the social climate of the firm itself and its productivity, representing as it does an achievement for all members to ensure that risks are managed and their occupational health is protected.



THE OHSAS STANDARD PROVIDES A MODEL OF A PROACTIVE SYSTEM FOR MANAGING HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE



II. ACTION PHASES

The establishment of a management system based on the OHSAS standards has to be broken down into various phases, comprising the drawing up of an OH&S management handbook according to the OHSAS 18001 model, approval thereof by company management and subsequent implementation and internal audit (by way of a pre-audit). The system is then certified by means of an external audit by an OH&S certifying firm. All these phases will be duly timetabled to ensure practical implementation in the company in a coherent and harmonised manner with the company's other management systems.

The outline below gives a nutshell account of the various phases involved in establishing an OHSAS 18000 management system:

DRAWING UP THE OHSAS 18001 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM		TIMETABLE	
PHASE I	MANAGEMENT SYSTEM HANDBOOK	DATA TAKING VISIT/S	All phases should be set progressively according to a timetable established by the company
		INITIAL DIAGNOSTIC REPORT	
		DRAFT OF THE OHSAS 18001 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	
		OHSAS 18001 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	
PHASE II	SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION	TRAINING PLAN AND SCOPE	
		MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION VISITS	
PHASE III	INTERNAL AUDIT	CONTROL VISITS INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT	
PHASE IV	CERTIFICATION	EXTERNAL AUDIT BY CERTIFYING BODY	
		CERTIFICATION	
PHASE V	CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE	EXTERNAL AUDIT BY CERTIFYING BODY	