ILO-OSH 2001 Safety and Health Management System

The management of workplace health and safety must be considered systematically within an organisation, in the same way as any other form of management. A systematic approach to management is often linked to the “PDCA cycle”:

- Plan.
- Do.
- Check.
- Act.

This general approach has been used in many management systems, including the ISO 9001 Quality Management System and the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System mentioned earlier.

Many different health and safety management systems exist, using a similar format, e.g. the OHSAS 18001 health and safety management standard. All these safety management systems have common principles which we can see demonstrated in the ILO’s Occupational Safety and Health Management System, ILO-OSH 2001. We can summarise the key elements of this system as: Policy, Organising, Planning and Implementation, Evaluation, Action for Improvement, and Audit.

- **Policy** - A clear statement has to be made to establish health and safety as a prime commitment of management at all levels of the organisation, but particularly at the top.
- **Organising** - A framework of roles and responsibilities for health and safety must be created within the organisation, from senior management down to the shop floor, including the appointment of specialist staff.
- **Planning and Implementing** – Detailed arrangements must be made for the management of health and safety. Central to this idea is the concept of risk assessment and the identification and implementation of safe systems of work and protective measures.
- **Evaluation** - Methods must be devised to monitor and review the effectiveness of the arrangements put into place. This might be done reactively, e.g. by reviewing accident and ill-health statistics, or actively, e.g. by reviewing inspection reports.
- **Action for Improvement** - Any shortcomings identified by the review process must be corrected as soon as possible by making whatever adjustments are necessary to the policy, organisation and arrangements for implementation.
- **Audit** - Arrangements must be made for the independent, systematic and critical examination of the safety management system to ensure that all parts are working acceptably well.
- **Continual Improvement** - The intention is that the safety management system will not remain static but will develop over time to become increasingly appropriate and useful to the organisation that it exists to serve.
Revision Questions

1. What are the organisational requirements for effective health and safety management?
2. What is the role of evaluation?

(Suggested Answers are at the end of Unit IGC1.)
Role of the Health and Safety Policy in Decision-Making

One foundation stone of good health and safety management in any organisation is the health and safety policy. A good health and safety policy sets out the organisation’s general approach and commitment to achieving particular aims and objectives. It provides a framework of general and specific health and safety responsibilities for staff, and guidance on the detailed operational arrangements to be taken to protect employees and others from harm as a result of workplace activities.

In particular the policy should influence decision-making within the organisation. This will occur in two ways:

- Firstly, senior management have to decide what kind of health and safety standards they are committing the organisation to and will have to allocate resources accordingly.
- Secondly, other managers have to ensure that their decision-making is in line with the policy and does not work against the organisation’s stated aims and objectives.

There is no one correct format or set of contents for a health and safety policy, but it must reflect the particular circumstances of the individual organisation: the hazards and risks, the size, and the complexity of the organisation. The policy must therefore be developed and tailored to fit the particular organisation that it exists to serve. For example, the safety policy of a small, low risk manufacturing company may be very different from that of a large, high risk oil and gas multinational.

Revision Question

3. Why might the health and safety policy of two organisations, both undertaking similar work, be different?
(Suggested Answers are at the end of Unit IGC1.)
Key Features and Content of a Health and Safety Policy

General Statement of Intent

This spells out the organisation’s overall approach to health and safety management, and its aims in terms of performance. It must commit the organisation to achieving legal compliance, and in many cases the commitment will be to achieving a higher standard than that set by the law, either as a matter of corporate policy or because of the nature of the organisation. The Statement will also usually contain goals and objectives for the organisation.

The Statement of Intent should recognise that managers and workers at all levels within the organisation have a part to play in implementing policy and it will therefore state very clearly that everyone must comply with the policy and that serious breaches of policy may be treated as disciplinary offences.

The General Statement of Intent should be:

- Signed by the person at the top of the organisation (Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Managing Director (MD), etc.) to authorise the policy and indicate that the policy commitment comes from the highest level. This person also has ultimate responsibility for health and safety in the organisation so should be committed to the policy’s contents.
- Dated, to indicate when the current statement was prepared and provide a reference point for review.

Objectives

The Statement of Intent may recognise some general objectives that have to be achieved by the organisation, such as:

- Meeting legal obligations.
- Provision of a safe workplace, safe equipment and safe systems of work, information, instruction, training and supervision.
- Risk assessment of all relevant workplace activities.
- Performance monitoring.
- Provision of adequate resources such as expert health and safety advice.
- Effective communication and consultation with workers.

(Continued)
The Statement of Intent may also set quantifiable targets for the organisation to achieve. Targets are useful as they allow performance to be measured and provide a tangible goal for staff to aim for. They also help to drive continual improvement. Possible targets might relate to:

- **Accident rates**: to achieve a reduction in the accident or ill-health rate.
- **Active monitoring**: to complete successfully a number of active monitoring activities, such as:
  - Successful completion of 90% of all supervisor safety inspections over a year.
  - Completion of key activities such as carrying out risk assessments across the organisation.
  - Delivery of training to all workers.
  - Development of a consultation process to engage the workforce.

Targets may be set in relation to past performance or the performance of other similar organisations, or the industry as a whole. The process of comparing performance in this way is known as “benchmarking”. So, if fatal road accident rates in an industry as a whole are, for example, one for every 100,000 miles driven, the target for a particular organisation may be to achieve that standard or have a lower rate.
The Organisation section will usually reflect the management hierarchy within the organisation and allocate responsibilities accordingly:

- The CEO or MD – ultimately responsible and accountable for the entire organisation.
- Management at all levels – responsible for ensuring that all appropriate safety measures are in place and being carried out effectively within their sphere of management control. This might be done by breaking down the management hierarchy into discrete layers and allocating responsibilities to each layer, e.g. senior managers’ responsibilities, middle managers’ responsibilities, supervisors’ responsibilities.
- All employees – responsible for acting safely at all times in the course of their duties at work.
- Competent persons – have operational duties but are also considered competent to carry out one or more specialist health and safety duties, e.g. as first aiders, fire marshals, etc.
- Specialist health and safety practitioners – responsible for providing advice to support management and employees in achieving safety.

Arrangements

The Arrangements section is often the largest section of the policy. It deals with the general arrangements that exist to manage health and safety and the specific arrangements that are necessary to deal with particular risks relevant to the organisation and its activities, so the systems and procedures used to manage health and safety are contained in this section.
General health and safety management arrangements:

- Carrying out risk assessments (planning and organising for health and safety).
- Identifying and supplying health and safety information, instruction and training.
- Accident and near miss reporting, recording and investigation.
- Consultation with workers on health and safety matters.
- Developing safe systems of work and permit-to-work systems to control hazards.
- Details of specific hazards to the organisation, e.g. hazardous substances or lone working.
- Carrying out specialist risk assessments such as those on hazardous substances.
- Control of contractors and visitors.
- Provision of safety-related training.
- Welfare and first-aid provision.
- Emergency procedures.
- Health surveillance.
- Communication of health and safety matters including hazards and control measures.
- Compliance monitoring, including auditing of systems but also the measuring of workplace parameters, e.g. noise, to assess the effectiveness of the arrangements.

All the general health and safety management issues will be relevant to all workplaces; they are generic issues. However, the practical arrangements made for the management of these issues will have to be tailored to suit the organisation.

Depending on the workplace, specific health and safety arrangements will also have to be developed to deal with particular risks.

The list of possible arrangements that might be required can be long and is dependent on the problems and issues faced by the organisation in question. For example, a lorry haulage company will have a set of arrangements to manage transport risk, but an office-based company will not.

Examples of specific risks and problems within an organisation that may need detailed arrangements include:

- Lone working.
- Housekeeping.
- Noise exposure control.
- Vibration exposure control.
- Control of exposure to toxic materials.
- Fire safety and prevention.
- Control of contractors.
- Control of transport risks.

Not all organisations will have all of these risks – these are “specific” to the organisation and its function.

Reviewing Policy

A health and safety policy should not be considered as rigid and unchanging. Instead, it should be subject to regular review so that it remains current and relevant. In this way it can be kept a “live” document.

It is good practice to review policy on a regular basis, e.g. annually. However, there are other circumstances which could give rise to reviews.

Circumstances which might require a review of policy:

- Technological changes, e.g. introduction of new plant or processes.
- Organisational changes, e.g. changes to key personnel, such as a new CEO or MD, or changes to the management structure of the organisation.
- Legal changes, such as the introduction of new legislation applicable to the organisation.
- Changes to the type of work that the organisation does.
- Where an audit, investigation or risk assessment suggests the policy is no longer effective.
- When requested by a third party, such as an insurance company or client.
- Following enforcement action.
- Following consultation with the workforce.
- After the passage of time (e.g. an annual review is a common practice).
The aim of the review is to make sure that the policy is up-to-date and accurate. The date of the previous review should be recorded on policy documents to indicate how current they are.

**Standards and Guidance**

Article 14 of the International Labour Organisation’s Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation 1981 (R164) states:

“Employers should, where the nature of the operations in their undertakings warrants it, be required to set out in writing their policy and arrangements in the field of occupational safety and health, and the various responsibilities exercised under these arrangements, and to bring this information to the notice of every worker, in a language or medium the worker readily understands.”

**Source:** R164 Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981

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The ILO’s Occupational Safety and Health Management System, ILO-OSH 2001 has additional guidance on safety policy. National governments usually have specific guidance on what this actually means in practice in a given region. For example, in the UK the HSE publish several guidance documents on the topic.

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**Hints And Tips**

Highlight sections of the text to make key ideas stand out. This will be very useful when you start your revision.

**More...**


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**Revision Questions**

4. What are the three key elements of a health and safety policy?

5. Who should sign the policy statement?

6. What health and safety responsibilities do all workers have?

7. What does a safety organisation chart show?

8. What circumstances might require a review of policy?

(Suggested Answers are at the end of Unit IGC1.)