ISO 45001 – Occupational health and safety

New international standard ISO 45001 replaces OHSAS 18001

The new, international ISO 45001 standard supersedes the British OHSAS 18001 standard. Both share the same objective: helping businesses to prevent accidents and manage health and safety in the workplace.

In 2015, ISO (International Organization for Standardization) began work on ISO 45001 with a view to developing a truly international standard that could bridge the divide created by OHSAS 18001. The main aim of this new standard is to protect all workers around the world with a single version of the standard.

The final draft of ISO 45001 was approved in January 2018 and the standard was published in March. Companies have 3 years to make the transition to the new standard before OHSAS 18001 is repealed.

What are the benefits of ISO 45001?

Occupational accidents and illnesses not only affect worker health and safety, but also have a major impact on organisations as a whole. ISO 45001 certification offers companies a variety of advantages, including:

- Improved management of incidents and a subsequent reduction in lost time
- Reduced insurance premiums and general cost savings related to health and safety incidents
- Reduced absenteeism and turnover rates
- Simplified communication with overseas suppliers, clients and partners
- Enhanced company image through a demonstration of social responsibility
- Improved competitive advantage
Who is this standard targeted at?

Any organisation can implement and certify a management system under ISO 45001, regardless of its size or sector. The standard is particularly aimed at companies wanting to:

- **Minimise risks to staff** and other stakeholders through the implementation of an internationally recognised health and safety management system
- Maintain and **constantly improve on performance levels** in the area of health and safety
- **Adjust all operations** to comply with the health and safety policies set out in this international standard

Transition from OHSAS 18001 to ISO 45001

The new standard was published on 12th March 2018 and there is a transition period in force for all companies wishing to remain certified. As of 11th March 2021, occupational health and safety management systems will need to be certified under ISO 45001. Understanding the principal aspects of the new standard is vital to ensuring a successful transition.

Applus+ Certification runs training courses to help clients understand how the changes will affect them and to explain the benefits of certifying to ISO 45001 standard. Our highly experienced team of auditors can also offer clients a professional audit of their management systems and certify their compliance with the new requirements.

How does the new standard differ from OHSAS 18001?

The new ISO 45001 standard differs from OHSAS 18001 in a number of key respects, principally in terms of structure and content. The following are some of the new features to be found in ISO 45001:

- **Terms and definitions.** ISO 45001 provides more definitions, including new concepts such as “Performance evaluation”, “Context of the organization”, “Support”, “Leadership”, “Operation”, “Improvement”, “Planning” and “Worker participation”.
- **Context of the organization.** To implement ISO 45001, a company’s internal characteristics –its structure, objectives, policies and strategies, amongst other
things – must first be taken into account. It is also a prerequisite to consider any external context that may impact on the management system – the cultural, social and economic climates, for example – as well as to assess competencies.

- **Leadership and worker participation.** While OHSAS 18001 refers only to leadership, clause 5 of the ISO 45001 standard brings in worker participation and consultation. It also places greater emphasis on the responsibility of management throughout the process.

- **Planning.** The new standard more clearly defines the requirement to identify hazards by assessing risks and opportunities. This facilitates the prediction and mitigation of undesired effects on processes.

- **Support.** Here, the primary difference between the new standard and OHSAS 18001 is that in ISO 45001, resources are listed under “Documented information” and not “Documents and records”.

- **Operation.** ISO 45001 incorporates controls on all processes and includes the identification of potential emergency scenarios so that an appropriate response can be planned.

- **Performance evaluation.** The new standard also covers the management system’s monitoring and measurement. The aim is to make it easier to meet the compliance obligations. This assessment is also fundamental as it feeds into both the internal audit and the management review.

- **Improvement.** This section is divided into two parts. The first refers to incidents, nonconformity and corrective action. The second details continual improvement, with objectives defined and the process of achieving them explained.