



AUDIT FACT SHEET

Auditing is a tool to provide a systematic, documented, periodic and objective evaluation of how well an organisation's management systems are performing by a critical examination of safety performance. The HSE define health and safety auditing as 'the structured process of collecting independent information on the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the total health and safety management system and drawing up plans for corrective action'. An audit supports monitoring by ensuring that appropriate management arrangements are in place, that adequate risk control systems exist and that appropriate workplace precautions are in place.

Together with performance review, the verified feedback provided by an audit will enable an organisation to maintain and develop the effectiveness of its safety management system. Audits are designed to assess policy, organisation, planning, measurement and review and therefore any audit has to be an in-depth, systematic and critical investigation into all aspects of safety. Auditing also includes checks on monitoring systems.

Audits are often referred to as monitoring activity, such as inspections, but monitoring is principally a line management role undertaken continuously or frequently. Auditing is an independent examination by competent persons outside the line management structure. An inspection is likely to take an hour or two whereas an audit needs to be planned in advance and may take several days to complete. Audits are likely to take place annually or less frequently and involve considerable pre-audit preparation and information gathering.

The audit process involves two key elements;

1. Collecting information about the health and safety management system
2. Making judgments about its adequacy and performance

The process is also likely to include interviews with employees. Staff selected should be a good cross section of the workforce and specific questions asked in relation to performance standards. Typical questions for employees could include;

- What instructions were you given before you began work at this workplace?
- Does the company's policy state what your responsibilities are?
- What training have you received to enable you to be an effective supervisor?

To reach a larger proportion of the workforce the use of questionnaires are a cost efficient and effective tool.

When it is necessary to make judgments then these must be carried out by a comparison between what is found against a relevant standard or benchmark. A judgment should be made, on the evidence collected, as to the degree of compliance of the system and workplace being audited.