



Risk-Based Thinking

In OH&S

ISO 45001:2018

Risk Management / Analysis of Risk

Risk Management

Earlier versions of Occupational Health and Safety standards have advocated risk management and risk avoidance, but it has been implicit.

The new ISO 45001:2018 standard explicitly expects organizations to identify workplace hazards and address risks associated with their operations, processes, and activities, aimed at and resulting in improved OH&S performance.

Besides identifying the risks, the new ISO standard expects user organizations to address opportunities for improvements and corrective actions based on the risk analysis.

Note that while corrective action is a requirement of ISO 45001:2018, the concept of preventive action is expressed through a risk-based approach where risks are determined and actions to address risks and opportunities are taken.

The standard does not require you to create a formal risk management system. However, this risk analysis exercise is intended to outline several approaches / options for the management of risk at your company.

To prepare for the change, it is important to understand Risk Based Thinking and begin to look at your operations, processes, and activities in terms of hazards and risks.

Risk is the possibility of an event or activity negatively impacting the operational or strategic objectives of an organization.

When evaluating risk, it is helpful to address it using two (2) metrics or parameters:

1. Severity (if harm happens, how serious is the event)
2. Likelihood (what is the probability of a harmful event)

Because this topic is so important, it will have an impact on your OHSMS.

Risk-Based Thinking

In the new ISO 45001:2018 document, risk is emphasized and in fact the word risk appears some 100 times in clauses 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 with the requirements outlined in clause 6. The objective of the emphasis on risk is to have the organization, through its OHSMS, address uncertainty in processes and activities that will affect the health and safety performance at your company.

When addressing risk in your OHSMS, be sure that you look beyond determining the "chance" that something happens to "the effect of an uncertainty" on your business and OH&S objectives.

There are five (5) attributes to enhance risk management:

1. An organization should accept accountability for their risks and develop comprehensive controls and risk abatement strategies.
2. Risk management should be a part of an organization's continual improvement strategy. Organizations should set performance goals and then review and modify processes as required. An organization should review and modify its systems, resources and capability / skills to ensure continual improvement.
3. Identify and train individuals with accountability for risk management. These individuals should have appropriate skills, have adequate resources to check and improve controls, monitor risks, and have the ability to communicate effectively with the workers and other parties.
4. Decision making within the organization should include consideration of risks and the application of the risk management process.
5. Maintain consistent and periodic reporting to workers and all interested parties of the organization's OH&S performance.