



FOCUS ARTICLE

The New ISO 45001 Standard: A Holistic Approach to Occupational Health and Safety

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ISO 45001 is the world's first international standard dealing with health and safety at work. It has been designed to offer a single, clear framework for all organisations wishing to improve their OH&S performance. Directed at the top management of an organisation, it aims to provide a safe and healthy workplace for employees and visitors. To achieve this, it is crucial to control all factors that might result in illness, injury, and, in extreme cases, death, by mitigating adverse effects on individuals' physical, mental and cognitive condition – and ISO 45001 covers all of those aspects.

While ISO 45001 draws on OHSAS 18001 – the former benchmark for OH&S – it is a new and distinct standard, not a revision or update. It is due to be phased in gradually over the next three years and will eventually replace up to 24 different standards across the globe.

What Are the Major Differences Between OHSAS 18001 and ISO 45001?

The main change is that ISO 45001 concentrates on the interaction between an organisation and its business environment while OHSAS 18001 was focused on managing OH&S hazards and other internal issues. But the standards also differ in a number of other broad ways:

- > ISO 45001 is process-based – OHSAS 18001 is procedure-based
- > ISO 45001 considers both risk and opportunities – OHSAS 18001 deals exclusively with risk
- > ISO 45001 includes the views of interested parties – OHSAS 18001 does not

These points represent a significant shift in the way health and safety management is perceived. OH&S is no longer treated as a “stand alone”, but must be viewed within the perspective of running a sound and sustainable organisation. The intent of this aspect of the standard moves safety from a demarcated function to a cultural dimension related to how an organisation conducts business.

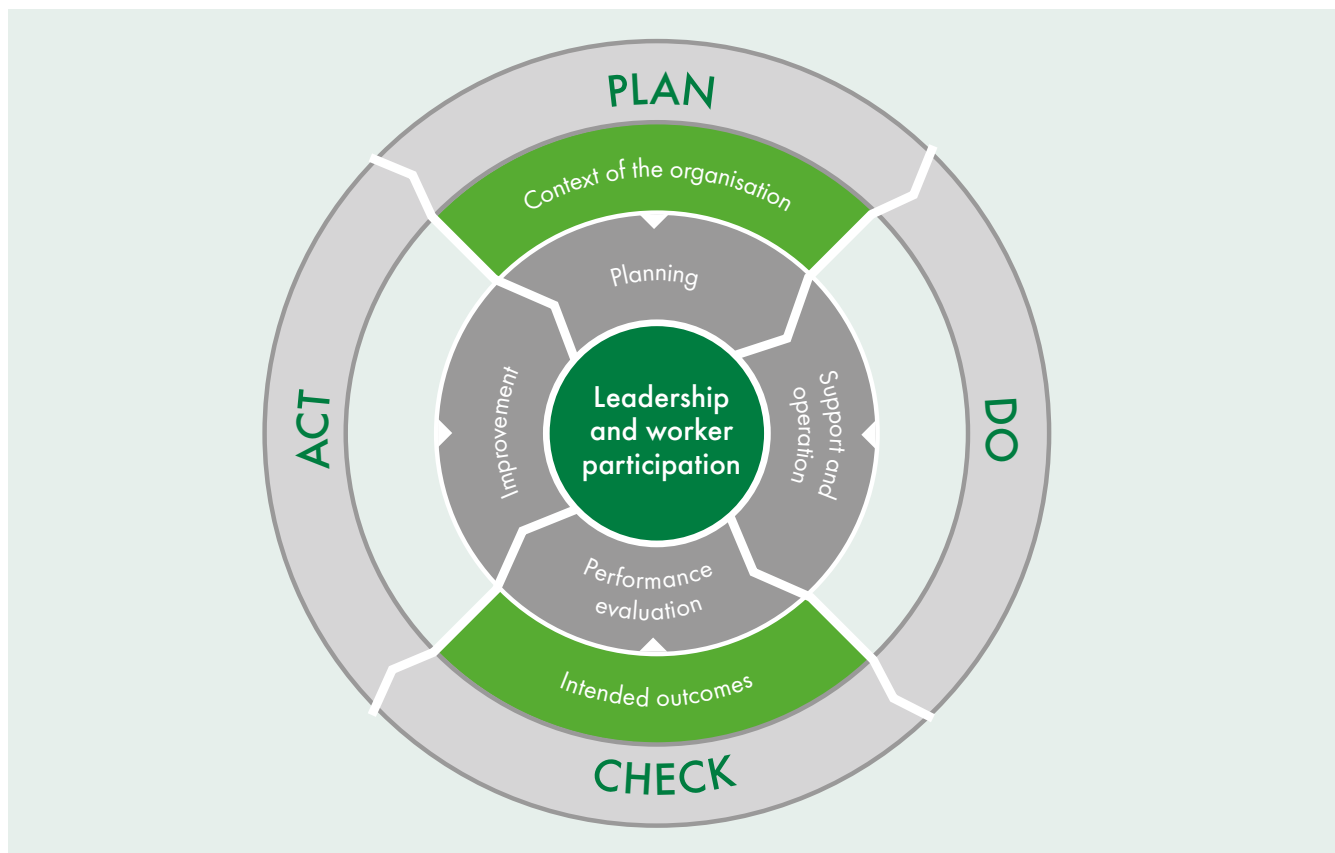
There have been a number of significant commentaries on the introduction of this standard that reflect the perspectives of different interest groups. David Parr of the British Safety Council offered up some insights in a recent interview:

“If you are going to adopt the new standard then you have to be able to demonstrate top management involvement... There are 13 explicit requirements in the ISO 45001 standard placed on management. It means that health and safety has to be integrated across the business. It is no longer acceptable for it to be a stand-alone function”.¹ In essence, safety is no longer exclusively the job of the safety department.

Commentators have also made reference to the interpretation of the standard and how to apply it. David Parr again, commenting:

“...we had three guys from the health and safety from an emergency service. They provided a very different approach, because they come across situations most of us do not encounter. Their interpretation of how to meet the standard was different to someone working in an insurance office. It demonstrates that the standard can be adopted by any sector, which was its intention.”² This is a clear move away from a compliance approach to a goal setting approach, a proper framework mentality.

While the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach remains, a new model has been designed for ISO 45001 (see below)³ that shows leadership and workforce participation at the heart of the model. We are pleased to see that this new approach is very much aligned with our Culture of Care framework, where leadership engagement and **workforce development** are the key pillars of a successful culture. The other important dimensions are control of work, learning and development, communication and the role of the HSE.



1 <https://www.shponline.co.uk/uncategorized/iso-45001-published/>
 2 <https://www.shponline.co.uk/uncategorized/iso-45001-published/>
 3 <http://www.system-concepts.com/insights/prepare-iso-45001/>

Within the new standard there are a number of clearly defined “success factors” intended to demonstrate that implementation has been achieved. Over half of these are critical dimensions or elements in the **Culture of Care** framework:

- > Top management leadership, commitment, responsibilities and accountability;
- > Top management developing, leading and promoting a culture in the organisation that supports the intended outcomes of the OH&S management system;
- > Communication;
- > Consultation and participation of workers, and, where they exist, workers’ representatives;
- > Effective process(es) for identifying hazards, controlling OH&S risks and taking advantage of OH&S opportunities;
- > Integration of the OH&S management system into the organisation’s business processes;
- > Directing and supporting individuals to contribute to the effectiveness of the OH&S management system;
- > Supporting other relevant management roles to demonstrate their leadership as it applies to their areas of responsibility;
- > Protecting workers from reprisals when reporting incidents, hazards, risks and opportunities.

Where is the Standard Taking Industry?

The vice president of engineering and chief technology officer at Honeywell Industrial, Gene Vena said in an interview with the Safety and Health Practitioner, that the launch of ISO 45001 marks a “...fundamental and welcome shift in the role of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) within industrial organisations...It is the first time that an international OHS standard formally acknowledges that creating a safer and healthier workplace goes

hand in hand with a more productive, efficient and sustainable business...A testament to this is that OHS is seen as being at the very heart of an organisation’s business strategy and ‘no longer treated as a stand alone’...Considering that last year, occupational injuries and ill-health cost UK employers £2.9 billion, giving organisations a single, clear framework to improve their OHS performance can really make the difference.”⁴ This, too, suggests that safety will move from a function or departmental approach toward a “cultural” approach. It also points out that the standard views good safety as good business.

Interestingly, Gene Vena goes on to say: “The publication of ISO 45001 comes at a time when the Internet of Things and data automation are already shifting the approach to risk-management from one of pure compliance to a process that is becoming more information-based...Whereas, traditionally, the process of OHS management has been a manual one, real-time data capture means that evidence of compliance can now be gathered automatically, thus avoiding errors. Additionally, the transformation of personal protective equipment (PPE) into smart, edge devices that collect and transmit data on occupational exposures can play a key role in preventing long-term illnesses...This connected approach is likely to open up unprecedented opportunities for companies to enhance their OHS in line with the new ISO 45001 standard”.⁵

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) itself states that, “The main change is that ISO 45001 concentrates on the interaction between an organisation and its business environment while OHSAS 18001 was focused on managing OH&S hazards and other internal issues”.⁶ This is a move away from traditional inspection and auditing of systems, processes and procedures to a more holistic view of how an organisation does its business. It is also a method of verifying that the culture supports the establishment and maintenance of a safe and healthy workplace for all employees and visitors.

⁴ <https://www.shponline.co.uk/uncategorized/iso-45001-published/>

⁵ <https://www.shponline.co.uk/uncategorized/iso-45001-published/>

⁶ <https://www.shponline.co.uk/uncategorized/iso-45001-published/>

Until now, ISO standards were interested in “products of safety” which would sit within policies, processes and procedures. Audits and inspections would assess these “products” and their use to provide assurance of compliance against the standard. Our experience has shown that in certain sectors or industries, this approach does not keep people or assets safe. The new approach is not only interested in the “products of safety” but the people who turn their intent into action. It is also interested in “opportunities”, or the potential for action beyond what is spelled out in the standard.

ISO 45001 introduces a far more powerful strategy for ensuring safety but gives rise, as well, to some questions for us to answer about how to achieve these goals in a meaningful way. The world of audit and inspection will need to measure leadership and workforce participation in **organisational assessments**, measurements that DEKRA has developed over many years and for which we have amassed a global database. As stated by ISO, one of the key differences between the old and new standards is in “the approach”.

DEKRA Organisational Reliability

DEKRA Organisational Reliability is a behavioural change consultancy. Working in collaboration with our clients, our approach is to influence the safety culture with the aim of ‘making a difference’. We deliver the skills, methods, and motivation to change leadership attitudes, behaviours and decision-making among employees. Measurable sustainable improvement of safety outcomes is our goal. We are a service unit of DEKRA SE, a global leader in safety since 1925 with over 39,000 employees in 50 countries.

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