ISO 45001
Frequently Asked Questions[1]

What is the new ISO 45001 standard?

While the ISO 45001 draws upon the OHSAS 18001 standard—the former benchmark for occupational health and safety (OH&S)—ISO 45001 is a new and distinct standard, not a revision or update, and is due to be phased in gradually over the next three years.

What are the primary differences between ISO 45001 and the OHSAS 18001 standard?

There are really four main differences between the two standards that need to be thoroughly considered. It should be noted that these differences represent a significant shift in the way health and safety management is perceived because the ISO 45001 standard no longer treats OH&S as a separate entity but as an essential component of running a sound and sustainable organization.

1

While the OHSAS 18001 standard is procedure-based, ISO 45001 is process-based and takes a systemic approach to occupational health and safety.

2

The new ISO 45001 standard is written and prescribed quite dynamically in all clauses, whereas the OHSAS 18001 standard is not.

3

The ISO 45001 considers both risk and opportunities, whereas the OHSAS 18001 standard focuses exclusively on risks.

4

Lastly, the ISO 45001 standard includes the input of all interested parties and seeks consultation from all levels of the organization as well as contractors, while the OHSAS standard does not seek such a wide perspective from internal/external stakeholders.

[1] International Organization for Standardization: When the world agrees, https://www.iso.org/iso-45001-occupational-health-and-safety.html (March 12, 2018)

My organization is already certified to the OHSAS 18001 Standard. How do I begin the migration?

It is suggested that your organization take the following steps to ensure successful migration to the new ISO 45001 standard.

1

Start with an assessment of your current system to get a complete understanding of the internal and external factors that might impact your organization's business, and establish a roadmap to control identified risks to your current management system.

2

Establish the scope of the management system, taking into consideration the goals your current system is designed to achieve.

3

Use this information to establish your processes, your risk evaluation/assessment, and, most importantly, to set the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the processes.

In order to complete the above steps, it is recommended that a "green eye" approach is utilized whereby an expert consulting company is brought in to conduct an in-depth analysis of the organization. This will facilitate an unbiased discussion around the current strengths and opportunities identified within the organization as well as a clear path toward achieving objectives.

What if I am new to ISO 45001? What do I need to know?

The answer largely depends on how much you know about ISO management systems. ISO 45001 adopts Annex SL, thus sharing a high-level structure (HLS) and identical core text, terms, and definitions with other recently revised ISO management system standards, such as ISO 9001:2015 (quality management) and ISO 14001:2015 (environmental management). If you are already acquainted with the common framework, then much of ISO 45001 will seem familiar to you and you will just need to fill the gaps in your organizational system.

If you are completely new to a management system, the standard is not easy to comprehend when you read it as a normal book. In order to be well-versed with this new standard, you have to understand all the interconnections between the specific clauses. Having said this, the best approach forward may be to seek advice from a consultancy, so that they can assist your organization in understanding the verbiage and successfully implementing the standard within your organization.

What are the benefits of ISO 45001 to my organization?

Organizations will need to update their current thinking and revise work practices in order to maintain organizational compliance. The benefits of ISO 45001 are significant when implemented underlined correctly. While the standard requires that OH&S risks be addressed and controlled, it also takes a systems, risk-based approach to the OH&S management system itself. This type of systemic approach will ensure that it is effective and that it is being continually improved to meet an organization's ever-changing environment. Moreover, given that this is an international standard and takes health and safety global, it ensures compliance with current legislation worldwide. Thus, gaining certification and endorsing the new standard can bring a host of corollary benefits, from reducing insurance costs by improving the overall safety and wellbeing of your organization to improving employee morale—all while continuing to meet your strategic targets. Furthermore, by endorsing the standard and becoming certified, your organization will take a public stance that distinguishes itself from businesses around the world as it will be evident to others where your business stands in terms of managing risks.

How easy will it be for OHSAS 18001 users to migrate to ISO 45001?

Due to the many similarities of ISO 45001 and the OHSAS 18001 standard, it is expected that the migration to ISO 45001 by businesses already certified to OHSAS 18001 should require minimal effort if organizations are well-versed in both of the standards.

In addition, because of its high-level approach, companies will not only find it easier to integrate this standard with the other standards (such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001) but will benefit all businesses, including smaller enterprises that are struggling to manage compliance with more than one standard.

What should be done now?

While certified organizations have three years to move from the OHSAS 18001 standard to the ISO 45001, organizations should act now as time will soon become one of the greatest challenges. Successful implementation will require careful planning well in advance. Thorough consideration of all risks should be taken prior to implementation.

What similarities exist between ISO 45001 and ISO 9001/14001?

The ongoing assessment of risks and opportunities is a common element in ISO 9001 (quality management) and ISO 14001 (environmental management), which use a similar risk-based framework and the Plan-Do-Check-Act model. Effective application of these measures should address concerns that can lead to long-term health issues and absence from work, as well as those that give rise to accidents. They are among the reasons why ISO 45001 is considered a significant improvement on the OHSAS 18001 standard, as it incorporates the effectiveness of the Plan-Do-Check-Act model.