



Impacts of an ISO OH&S Management System Standard ***An ENLAR® Executive Briefing Paper***

Development of ISO OHSMS Certification Standard Moving Forward

ISO is moving forward with the development of an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS) standard. This will be a specification standard that is intended to be used as the basis for third-party certification of an organization's OHS management system. This standard will support the implementation and certification of integrated management systems. This includes integrated management systems designed to meet the requirements of the quality management system standard (ISO 9001), the environmental management system standard (ISO 14001) and the new ISO OHSMS standard.

Based on the information provided in the proposal, it is anticipated that the OHSMS standard will be finalized in 2016. This will be shortly after the revisions of both ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 are anticipated to be complete.

In accordance with the rules established by ISO that govern the development of its standards, the new OHSMS standard will be required to have the same top-level structure, the same defined terms and many of the same core requirements as all the other ISO management system standards.¹

Impact on other OHSMS Standards

Currently, there are a number of different OHSMS standards in use – including OHSAS 18001 and ANSI Z10.²

The ISO OHSMS Standard will replace OHSAS 18001. This means that, once the ISO OHSMS standard is finalized, certification to OHSAS 18001 will cease. Organizations who want to continue to be third-party certified will need to meet the requirements of the ISO OHSMS standard and apply to become certified to it instead.

The ISO OHSMS standard will likely also replace country-specific OHSMS standards – such as the ANSI Z10 standard. Even if the ANSI Z10 designation is retained, the content of the standard will be the same as the ISO OHSMS standard.

Anticipated Impact on Organizations

Much like ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, the ISO OHSMS standard will set out the requirements organizations must meet in establishing and implementing an occupational health and safety management system. Although developed as a voluntary consensus standard, the ISO OHSMS standard will likely be incorporated by reference into contracts and sustainability frameworks, as well as governmental regulations. It is anticipated that it will replace the references to OHSAS 18001 that are already incorporated into some supply-chain contracts, sustainability reporting frameworks and the OHS regulations in some countries.

There is a major push for ensuring that OHS standards become globally harmonized.

Public pressure is increasing to ensure that adequate worker protection becomes less dependent on geographic location. Consumers are increasingly willing to factor working conditions into their buying decisions. Organizations with multiple-layer supply chains face reputational risks associated with selling goods made in factories that lack adequate worker protection. One of the primary uses of ISO standards is standardization in the management of global supply chains and outsourced services.

Based on comments made by Dr. David Michaels, the head of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA is also exploring an increased reliance on international consensus standards in its rulemaking process.³ This would be consistent with OSHA's revision of its Hazard Communication Standard so that it aligns with the Global Harmonized

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System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS).⁴ It is reasonable to expect that global standards will increasingly find their way into OSHA regulations.

As countries take steps to protect workers, companies are finding it difficult to manage OHS issues across multiple jurisdictions. There is a desire on the part of multinational corporations to have a single global standard rather than numerous, and potentially conflicting, country-specific standards. Adoption of internationally-agreed upon standards can make compliance easier.

With the increase in organizational sustainability reporting, financial investors are focusing more on environmental and social issues. There is increased pressure for accurate and globally comparable metrics that can be used in making investment decisions. Financial investors want objective metrics that they can use in assessing whether or not organizations have adequately addressed their OHS risks.

What Will an ISO OHSMS Standard Include?

This standard will be required to have the top-level structure specified in Annex SL of the ISO directives. This will result in a significant change from the structure currently used in OHSAS18001:2007 and in ANSI Z10-2012. The standard will also be required to utilize the common definitions established for ISO management system standards. This will mean changes to some of the terms currently being used.

There are some areas where the content of an ISO OHSMS standard will likely be the subject of intense debate. These include the following:

- The processes for identification of OHS hazards and the assessment of associated risks;
- The extent to which workers can, or are required to, participate in the development and implementation of the OHS management system;
- Organizational responsibilities for the safety and health impacts of outsourced processes and services; and
- Responsibility of senior management for ensuring that the OHS management system is effective.

Although the overall structure of the standard is set, the exact requirements that will be included are, as yet, unknown. What can be predicted is that the resolution of any debate about what should, or should not be, included in this standard will be determined by those who actively participate in the development of the OHSMS standard at the international level. Once the standard is finalized, the requirements for what constitutes an effective OHS management system will be set for many years to come.

¹ ISO Technical Committees are required to follow the rules set out in the ISO Directives. For the development of management system standards, the requirements set out in Annex SL must be followed. For more information about the impact of the Annex SL rules, go to <http://ohsas18001expert.com/2013/03/13/proposal-for-an-iso-ohsms-standard/>

² According to results of the 2011 survey conducted by the OHSAS Project Group into the availability of OHS Standards and Certificates, there are 48 OHSMS requirements documents in use, 40 OHSMS guidance documents available and over 100,000 OHSMS certifications have been issued to organizations (see survey results included with the ISO OHSMS NWIP).

³ Remarks at the American Industrial Hygiene Conference on May 21, 2013. For more information, go to <http://www.ishn.com/articles/95950-takeaways-from-osh-chief-talk>

⁴ For more information about GHS, go to <http://www.osha.gov/dsg/hazcom/>