

# Health and Safety Essentials

## Lecture 5 – Audits Inspections & Monitoring in OHS

George Steve Darmanin  
MSc.OHSEM CMIOSH

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025



Undergraduate Diploma in  
Occupational Health and Safety

# Recap last week's topic

- What is the purpose of Governance?
  - To provide direction, ensure accountability, and guide decision-making to achieve organisational objectives ethically, transparently, and effectively.
- What are the 3 the Sections/Parts of HSE's Policy Model?
  1. Statement of Intent
  2. Responsibilities for Health and Safety
  3. Arrangements for health and safety





# What is the purpose of Governance?



## What are the 3 the Sections/Parts of HSE's Policy Model?

# Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among inspections, audits, and monitoring in the context of OHS, understanding their unique roles and applications in maintaining a safe workplace.
2. Apply core criteria such as reliability, validity, and triangulation to evaluate performance in inspections, audits, and monitoring activities.
3. Identify best practices in conducting effective inspections, audits, and monitoring, including systematic preparation, data collection, documentation, and follow-up.
4. Integrate audit, inspections and monitoring principles with OHS practices to improve the organisation's consistency, compliance, safety culture.



# What is an OHS Audit?

- Definition: A systematic, independent review to ensure an organisation's compliance with health and safety standards.
- Purpose: To evaluate and improve the effectiveness of safety processes and ensure compliance with regulations and standards.



# Why audits matter / or sometimes don't

- “In this sample, about 16% of corrective actions were strongly connected to the hazard identified — most were weak or moderate, focusing on documentation or superficial fixes.” (Hutchinson et al., 2024)
- It provides a critical perspective on audits — showing how many corrective actions are weakly aligned to actual hazards (~ 16% strongly aligned in the study). [sciencedirect.com](https://www.sciencedirect.com)+1
- This contrasts well with more optimistic research and prompts deeper analysis and discussion — valuable for your diploma-level course.
- Audits may become a well-developed strategy for avoiding uncomfortable findings...

# Limits of Audits

- “Audit and inspection programmes show generally positive effects, but their success depends on how management acts on findings rather than on the audit itself.”

Robson, L. S. et al. (2007), *Safety Science*

# Comparison with Quality Audits

- **Quality Audits:** Primarily focus on verifying product consistency, reliability, and compliance with specified quality standards. They ensure that processes and outputs meet established requirements to maintain high product quality and customer satisfaction.
- **OHS Audits:** These focus on assessing safety management systems' effectiveness, compliance, and robustness. The primary aim is to ensure a safe, healthy, and legally compliant workplace by identifying potential hazards, assessing risk controls, and recommending improvements.



# OHS Audits

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) audits, like quality audits, use a systematic approach to evaluate compliance but are focused on workplace health and safety. These audits assess whether the safety management systems in place effectively control workplace hazards, protect employees, and comply with legal and regulatory requirements. Key areas of focus include:

1. **System Effectiveness:** OHS audits examine how well safety management systems operate. This includes reviewing policies, procedures, and control measures to ensure they are designed and implemented effectively to minimise workplace hazards.
2. **Risk Identification and Control:** OHS audits seek to identify potential health and safety risks and assess whether existing controls are adequate. This involves evaluating how well the organisation identifies hazards, assesses risk levels, and implements control measures to mitigate them.
3. **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** OHS audits ensure the organisation complies with relevant health and safety legislation. Non-compliance can result in legal repercussions, financial penalties, or reputational damage, so this aspect is crucial.

# OHS Audits

4. **Employee Safety and Welfare:** Unlike quality audits, which focus on product outcomes, OHS audits prioritise worker safety and well-being. They assess whether safety procedures, training, and equipment effectively protect employees from harm.
5. **Incident Investigation and Corrective Actions:** If incidents or near-misses have occurred, the OHS audit examines the root causes, assesses the effectiveness of the corrective actions taken, and identifies improvements to prevent recurrence.
6. **Continuous Improvement in Safety Culture:** OHS audits aim to foster a proactive safety culture. This involves not just addressing issues but also encouraging ongoing improvements in safety practices, fostering a safer workplace environment.



# Similarities Between Quality and OHS Audits

1. **Systematic Approach:** Both types of audits rely on a structured, objective, and systematic approach to evaluating processes. They follow a planned methodology, often involving preparation, data gathering, analysis, reporting, and follow-up, to ensure consistency and reliability in their findings.
2. **Focus on Standards and Compliance:** Quality audits focus on adherence to quality standards, while OHS audits focus on health and safety regulations. Both aim to ensure compliance with established benchmarks—whether industry standards, company policies, or legal requirements. This helps organisations avoid risks, whether related to product quality or workplace safety.
3. **Continuous Improvement:** Both audits support the goal of continuous improvement. Quality audits aim to improve product or service quality by refining processes and reducing variability, while OHS audits aim to enhance workplace safety by strengthening safety systems and reducing risks. The audits help organisations proactively address weaknesses, improve efficiency, and foster better outcomes over time.



# Similarities Between Quality and OHS Audits

4. Corrective and Preventive Actions: Both types of audits not only seek to identify non-compliance but also focus on implementing corrective and preventive actions. In quality audits, this could mean adjusting manufacturing processes, while in OHS audits, it could mean implementing new safety controls or updating risk assessments. Both audit types work to prevent issues from recurring.

5. Objective Evaluation for Decision-Making: Both audits provide an objective evaluation of an organisation's processes, which aids management in making informed decisions. In quality audits, this might lead to decisions about product improvements, while in OHS audits, it could lead to changes in safety protocols or training programs. The findings from both types of audits serve as a valuable tool for managers to make data-driven improvements.

6. Documentation and Record-Keeping: Both audits require comprehensive documentation. Quality audits record information on product specifications, deviations, and corrective actions, while OHS audits document safety protocols, compliance records, and risk management practices. Proper record-keeping is essential for future audits, regulatory inspections, and internal assessments.



# Differences in Focus and Approach

While quality audits and OHS audits share similarities, their areas of focus differ:

- **End Goal:** Quality audits are product-centric, aiming to ensure a high-quality output that meets customer expectations. OHS audits are people-centric, focusing on worker safety and ensuring the workplace is free from preventable risks.
- **Primary Metrics:** Quality audits measure metrics like defect rates, process efficiency, and adherence to product standards. OHS audits measure compliance with safety regulations, the presence of effective control measures, and overall risk levels in the workplace.
- **Impact of Findings:** Non-compliance in quality audits may lead to product recalls, reputational damage, or customer dissatisfaction. In OHS audits, non-compliance can lead to more immediate consequences, such as workplace accidents, injuries, legal fines, or reputational harm related to poor safety practices.



# Conducting Effective Audits in OHS

## 1. Strategic Planning and Scope Definition

1. Define Scope and Objectives: Focus on system-wide elements like safety policies, SMS, and compliance with standards.
2. Preparation: Review relevant regulations, organisational policies, and previous audits.
3. Outcome: Ensure a comprehensive assessment of safety management practices.

## 2. Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

1. Data Collection: Structured observations, document reviews, and interviews across departments.
2. Analysis and Prioritisation: Identify trends, assess compliance, and prioritise risks.
3. Report and Recommendations: Detailed report with findings, action items, timelines, and assigned responsibilities.



# Importance of OHS Audits

- Compliance and Assurance: Verifies adherence to OHS regulations and reduces legal risks.
- Issue Identification: Uncovers hidden risks and inefficiencies.
- Risk Management: Prevents incidents by identifying hazards.
- Continuous Improvement: Reveals strengths in safety practices for replication across other areas.



# Compliance and Assurance

- One of the primary functions of an OHS audit is to ensure compliance with regulatory standards and internal policies. This compliance is critical, as it helps organisations avoid legal repercussions and reputational harm. Audits provide a structured method for verifying that workplace practices meet all required standards, reinforcing an organisation's commitment to safety and setting a solid foundation for a compliant, risk-aware workplace.



# Issue Identification

- OHS audits are invaluable in uncovering latent risks that might otherwise go unnoticed, as well as inefficiencies that could hinder operational effectiveness. Through thorough examination, audits reveal gaps & hazards such as poorly maintained equipment, improper storage practices, or gaps in training that might not be immediately evident. By identifying these issues early, audits enable organisations to address them before they escalate into incidents, saving time, resources, and potentially, lives.



# Risk Management

- A proactive approach to risk management is a hallmark of a robust OHS programme. Audits systematically identify gaps in the systems and hazards, which allows organisations to implement preventive measures rather than relying solely on reactive responses. In this way, audits contribute directly to reducing workplace incidents, creating a safer environment for employees and promoting confidence in the workplace.

# Continuous Improvement

- While audits certainly expose areas for improvement, they are equally valuable in highlighting successful practices that are already in place. Identifying these effective strategies allows organisations to replicate strengths across other areas, enhancing the overall quality of their safety culture. Acknowledging and expanding on effective practices helps create a positive cycle of improvement, showing employees that safety is not just a matter of correcting mistakes, but about building on successes to raise the standard of sa



# Core Criteria for Evaluating OHS Performance

- Reliability: Consistent findings across audits and inspectors.

Example:

If different inspectors conduct monthly PPE compliance checks, their findings should be consistent if standards are met. Consistent results build trust in data trends over time.

- Validity: Measures should reflect true safety performance.

Example:

Tracking ergonomic complaints alone may not reflect true risks. Instead, conducting workstation assessments (e.g., desk height, chair adjustability) provides a more accurate measure of ergonomic safety.

- Triangulation: Using multiple data sources to verify results.

Example:

A construction company combines incident reports, employee surveys, and on-site observations to assess safety. This multi-source approach ensures a comprehensive view, reducing reliance on any single data type.



# Additional Criteria for OHS Audits

- Accuracy: Measures should capture precise information.
- Completeness: Audits should include all relevant safety aspects for a full evaluation.

# Types of Audits in OHS context

## Typical examples

- System Audits – Safety Management System
- Compliance Audit – a thorough assessment of applicable regulations and standards and if and how they are being complied to.
- Process Audits - concentrate on particular activities or functions, assessing them in detail for compliance and effectiveness. E.g. a step-by-step evaluation of safety protocols associated with handling materials, including the use of appropriate lifting techniques, equipment handling procedures, and adherence to weight limits.
- Product (Outcome) Audits - focusing on actual outcomes such as incident rates, injury statistics, or near-miss records these audits provide a clear picture of safety performance over time. E.g. if a protocol is designed to reduce the rate of slips and falls, an outcome audit will review the corresponding data to determine if there has been a meaningful decrease in these incidents.

# Dangers of Incomplete Data

- When audits lack completeness, they fail to
  - Provide a full account of workplace safety,
  - May overlook smaller or less obvious risks, which can escalate if not addressed.
- Furthermore, incomplete data can
  - Create a false sense of security within the organisation



# Introduction to Inspections in OHS

## What are Inspections in OHS?

- **Definition:** An inspection is a systematic process of examining the workplace to identify hazards, verify compliance with safety protocols, and ensure a safe working environment.
- **Purpose of Inspections:**
  - Identify Immediate Hazards
  - Ensure Compliance:
  - Promote a Safety Culture
- **Key Characteristics:**
  - Regular and Routine: Often conducted daily, weekly, or monthly
  - Specific Focus Areas: Inspections may target particular tasks, equipment, or compliance areas.
  - Quick Action-Oriented: Designed to detect and address issues quickly to prevent accidents.



# Impact of Inspections

- “There is moderately strong evidence that occupational health and safety inspections improve injury outcomes and compliance with legislation.”

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Andersen, J. H., Mikkelsen, S., & Pedersen, E. H. (2019), *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*



# Types of Inspections

- Routine Inspections: These are conducted regularly to identify immediate risks.
- Planned Inspections: Scheduled, thorough assessments to review safety compliance.
- Compliance-Based Inspections: Focus on regulatory adherence.



# Behavioral Inspections

- Purpose: Observe worker compliance with safety practices.
- Examples: PPE usage, machine safety checks, and following safety protocols.



# Conducting Effective Inspections

## 1. Focused Preparation and Pre-Inspection Review

1. Define Objectives: Target immediate risks and compliance with specific safety protocols.
2. Use Checklists: Tailor checklists to the work area or process.
3. Review Past Findings: Familiarise with past reports to identify recurring issues.

## 2. Real-Time Observation and Detailed Documentation

1. Observation and Checks: Assess equipment, PPE, and work practices in real time.
2. Documentation: Record findings, locations, and corrective actions (include photos if necessary).
3. Immediate Follow-Up: Discuss findings with area personnel to address immediate issues.



# Differences Between Inspections and Audits

| Aspect               | Inspections                                                                      | Audits                                                                                       |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Objective</b>     | Identify immediate hazards and ensure compliance with specific safety protocols. | Assess overall safety system effectiveness and compliance with broader regulatory standards. |
| <b>Focus</b>         | Specific tasks, equipment, and day-to-day safety practices                       | Systemic policies, procedures, and long-term safety compliance                               |
| <b>Frequency</b>     | Conducted regularly (daily, weekly, or monthly)                                  | Typically performed less frequently (e.g., annually)                                         |
| <b>Outcome</b>       | Immediate corrective actions and follow-up on specific hazards                   | Comprehensive report with recommendations for system-wide improvements                       |
| <b>Scope</b>         | Task-specific, focusing on particular areas or processes                         | e.g. Organisation-wide, evaluating the entire Safety Management System (SMS)                 |
| <b>Documentation</b> | Checklist of specific hazards, photographs, and brief corrective action notes    | Detailed report with analysis, trends, and strategic recommendations for improvement         |

# Follow-Up Actions (both Audits and Inspections)

- Importance of Follow-Up: Ensures identified issues are resolved.
- Action Plans: Assign responsibilities, set timelines, and track improvements.



# Break



# Monitoring in OHS

- Definition:

Monitoring is the ongoing process of tracking and evaluating safety conditions, behaviours, and controls to ensure hazards are managed effectively and that the safety system functions as intended. Unlike inspections and audits, which are periodic and often task-specific, monitoring is a continuous activity that helps identify deviations or trends over time, promoting a proactive safety culture.

- Purpose of Monitoring:

- Proactive Hazard Detection: Identify emerging risks before they lead to incidents.
- Evaluate Control Effectiveness: Assess whether safety controls are working as expected.
- Support Continuous Improvement: Provide data-driven insights to refine and improve safety practices over time.

- Types of Monitoring:

- Proactive Monitoring: Preventive approach to identify risks before they result in incidents.
- Reactive Monitoring: Responds to incidents and near-misses, learning from past events to improve safety systems.



# Proactive Monitoring Techniques

## Examples:

- Safety Tours: Regular walkthroughs to observe safety compliance.
- Behavior Sampling: Observing safe work practices.
- Sampling Frequency: Set intervals to ensure consistent monitoring.



# Reactive Monitoring Techniques

## Examples:

- **Incident Investigations:** Analysing accidents or near-misses to understand root causes and identify changes to reduce recurrence.
- **Trend Analysis:** Reviewing injury or illness records to detect patterns, such as an increase in specific types of incidents, and address underlying issues.
- **Employee Feedback and Reports:** Encouraging workers to report unsafe conditions or near-misses provides critical insights into real-time safety issues.



# Combining Proactive and Reactive Monitoring

- Proactive + Reactive: Creates a comprehensive safety strategy.
- Example: Use incident trends to focus on proactive inspections.

# Case Study: ABC Manufacturing Ltd.

- Scenario Overview

- Company: ABC Manufacturing Ltd. – medium-sized factory producing automotive parts.
- Departments: Assembly, machining, quality control.
- Recent issues: Increase in minor incidents (slips, falls, ergonomic complaints).

- Audit Findings

- Safety procedures outdated.
- Training records inconsistent.
- Certain hazards not fully addressed.
- Routine inspections missed issues.



# Case Study: ABC Manufacturing Ltd.

- **Maria's Challenge (Safety Manager)** Develop a strategy that integrates Auditing, Inspections, and Monitoring to:
  - Detect hazards early.
  - Ensure compliance with OHS regulations.
  - Strengthen and continuously improve the company's safety culture.



# Case Study: ABC Manufacturing Ltd.

- Task Overview (20 minutes)
- Work in groups.  
Your task is to design a short written or visual action plan showing how ABC Manufacturing Ltd. can use audits, inspections, and monitoring together to improve its safety culture.

# Case Study: Expected Output

| Function          | Objective                                                  | Frequency                          | Responsibility         | Example Tool / KPI          | Expected Outcome                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Audit</b>      | What it aims to check (e.g. compliance with SMS, training) | How often (e.g. annually, by area) | Who leads it           | What evidence is used       | What improvement result is expected |
| <b>Inspection</b> | What risks it focuses on                                   | How often                          | Who conducts it        | Checklist, report, etc.     | What will change immediately        |
| <b>Monitoring</b> | What data or behaviour is tracked                          | Continuous or periodic             | Who gathers / analyses | KPI dashboard, trend review | How it supports improvement         |

# Case Study: What to Include

- **1** Define the specific purpose of each tool (Audit / Inspection / Monitoring).
- **2** Set frequency and responsibility — who does it and how often.
- **3** List one example tool or KPI for each.
- **4** State how findings will be used to ensure continuous improvement (feedback loop).
- **5** Prepare to justify your choices briefly during presentation (why this frequency, why this order, etc.).



# Case Study: Evaluation / Feedback Focus

- During discussion or presentation, I'll look for:
  - Logical integration between the three processes.
  - Realistic scheduling and role allocation.
  - Understanding of how each contributes to legal compliance and culture change.
  - Evidence that corrective actions are planned and followed up.

## Reflection Question (for debrief)

- “How does your group’s approach ensure that identified issues are not only recorded but also resolved and learned from?”



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