Und

Health and Safety Essentials

QUICK RECAP of

Lecture 1:
Introduction to Occupational Health & Safety

Date: October 2026

Undergraduate Diploma in
Occupational Health and Safety

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Health and Safety Essentials

Lecture 2 – Understanding Organisational Context and Management Theories

Applying Management Theory to Occupational Health & Safety Practice

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Undergraduate Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety

Learning Objectives

- Understand the Levels of Management in OHS.
- Explore Key Management Functions and Their Failures in OHS.
- Examine Mintzberg's Managerial Roles in the Context of OHS.
- Analyze Real-World Case Studies to Apply Management Theories.
- Understand the Impact of Organizational Structures on Safety.

Learning Objective - 1

Understand the Levels of Management in OHS:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of top, middle, and lower-level management in ensuring workplace safety.
- Analyze how different management levels influence safety culture and risk management.

Learning Objective - 2

Explore Key Management Functions and Their Failures in OHS

- Examine the planning, organizing, leading, and controlling functions in managing occupational health and safety.
- Understand how failures in these functions can lead to major industrial accidents, as demonstrated by the Deepwater Horizon case.

Learning Objective - 3

Examine Mintzberg's Managerial Roles in the Context of OHS

- Apply Mintzberg's managerial roles (interpersonal, informational, and decisional) to real-life situations.
- Evaluate how poor communication, lack of leadership, and weak decision-making contribute to safety failures.

Learning Objective - 4

Analyse Real-World Case Studies to Apply Management Theories

- Use the Deepwater Horizon disaster as a case study to assess planning failures, communication breakdowns, and controlling deficiencies in OHS.
- Develop recommendations for how better management could have prevented the disaster.

Learning Objective - 5

Understand the Impact of Organizational Structures on Safety

- Compare centralised and decentralised organisational structures and their effects on safety decision-making.

- Evaluate how organisational culture and structure can either support or hinder effective OHS management.

"Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets" - Dr. Paul Batalden

*It is often misattributed to W. Edwards Deming.

What the quote implies:

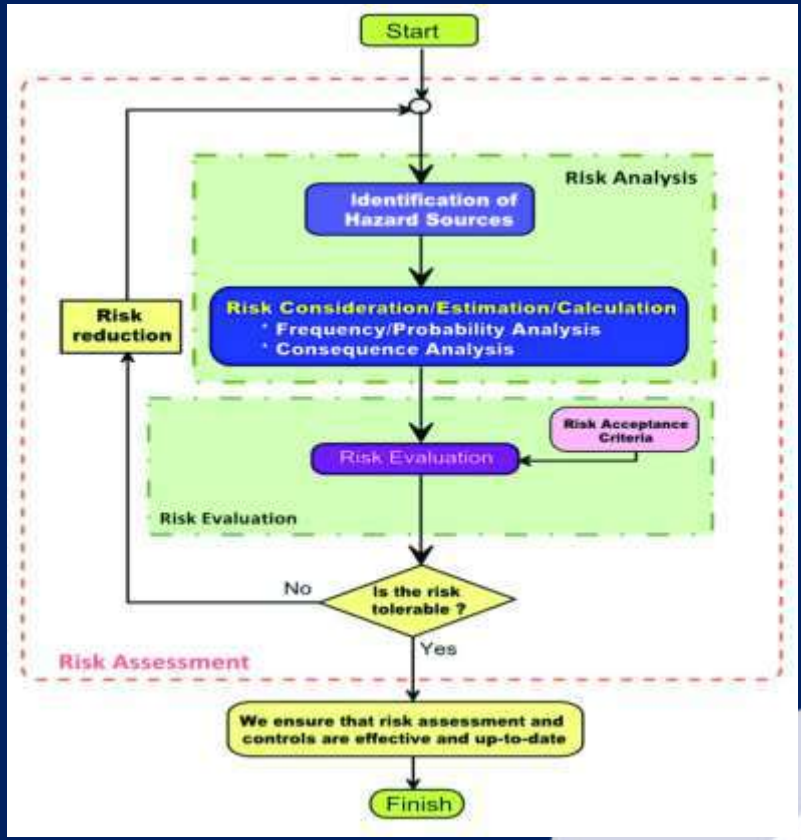
- **Results are a function of the system:**
  - The outcomes are not accidental. If a system consistently produces a certain result, it implies the system was designed, intentionally or not, to achieve that specific outcome.
- **Changing the system is key:**
  - To change the results, one must change the system's design. Focusing on individuals or blaming them for poor results is often unproductive because the system is the root cause of the problem.
- **Systems are often created to serve a purpose:**
  - For example, a customer service system might be designed to protect company risk and drive sales, which could lead to results that are frustrating for the customer, even if the individual representatives are following the rules correctly.
- **The quote is a call to action:**
  - It encourages leaders and individuals to analyze and redesign their systems t achieve desired outcomes, rather than accepting current results as fixed or t of individuals.

Organisational context: ISO 45001

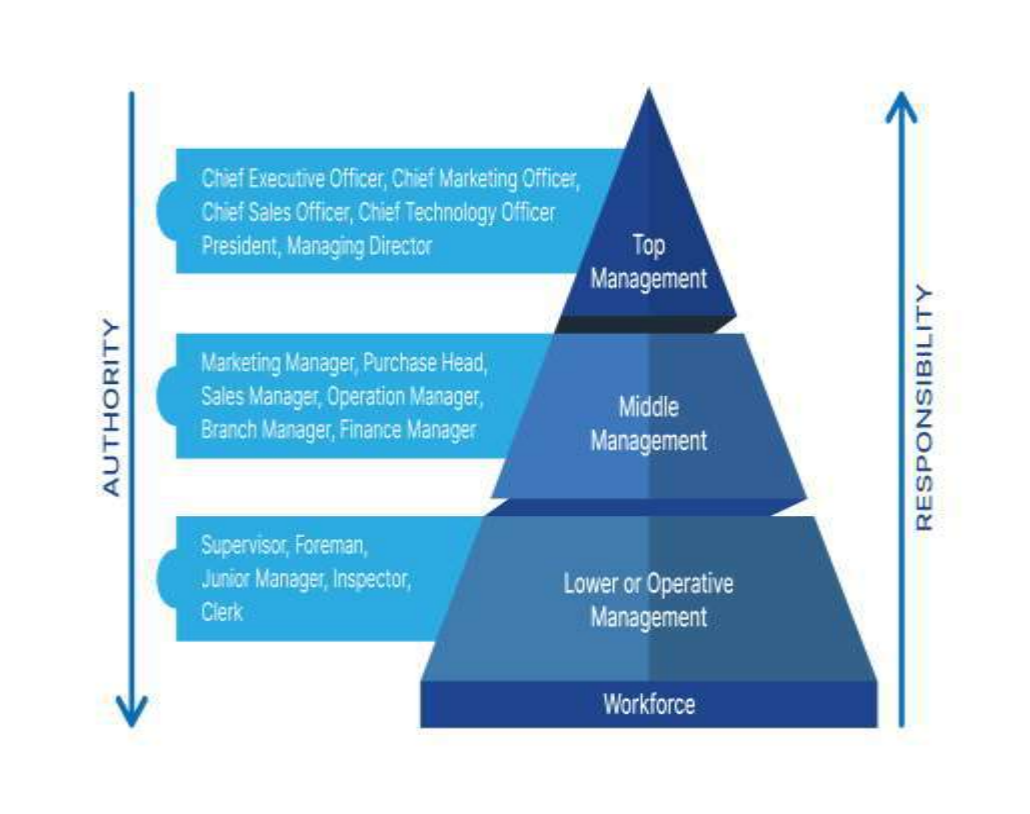
- Clause 4.1: understand internal and external issues relevant to OHS outcomes.
- Clause 4.2: identify workers and other interested parties, and their relevant needs and expectations.
- Internal examples: leadership behaviour, staffing, competence, workload, contractor interfaces.
- External examples: legislation, supply chains, technology, labour market and client demands.
- Discussion: How can production pressure undermine an otherwise good safety procedure?

Overview of Management (OHS context)

- What is Management in OHS?
  - Implementing safety protocols
  - Leading and monitoring safety initiatives
  - Organising safety resources
  - Controlling safety performance
  - Planning improvements in safety culture



Levels of Management



- **Top-Level Management:**
  - Strategic planning, compliance oversight, external relations
- **Middle-Level Management:**
  - Policy implementation, resource allocation, reporting
- **Lower-Level Management:**
  - Direct supervision, training, hazard identification

Management accountability is not delegated

- Top management remains accountable for the effectiveness of the OHS management system (ISO 45001, clause 5.1).
- Line managers control work, resources, priorities and supervision; the OHS professional advises and supports.
- A signed risk assessment or safety inspection does not transfer operational responsibility.
- Ask: Who can actually authorise a shutdown, provide resources and change unsafe work practices?

Functions of Management

- **Planning:** Setting **safety goals and objectives**.
- **Organising:** Allocating **safety roles and resources**.
- **Leading:** Motivating teams to follow **safety protocols**.
- **Controlling:** Monitoring and evaluating **safety performance**.

Planning

- **Strategic Planning:** Long-term safety initiatives (e.g., reducing accidents by 50% over 5 years).
- **Tactical Planning:** Short-term actions (e.g., quarterly audits, staff training).
- **Operational Planning:** Daily tasks (e.g., ensuring PPE is available).

Organising

- Identifying safety-related tasks
- Assigning roles and responsibilities
- Allocating resources (PPE, training)
- Ensuring inter-departmental coordination

Leading

- Motivating employees to prioritise safety
- Fostering a safety-conscious culture
- Delegating safety tasks effectively
- Communicating safety goals

Controlling

- Monitoring safety performance
- Evaluating compliance with safety protocols
- Correcting deviations from the plan
- Providing feedback for future safety planning

Practical scenario: Production versus safety

- A production line repeatedly jams. Operators bypass a guard to clear it quickly and meet output targets.
- Supervisors know the practice occurs; maintenance has requested a redesign but funding is deferred.
- In Groups:

1. Identify failures in planning, organising, leading and controlling.
2. Which management level can address each cause?
3. What should happen immediately and in the longer term?

"Managers work at an unrelenting pace, characterised by brevity, variety, and fragmentation." — Mintzberg (1973)

- "Mintzberg's research showed that managers' lives are hectic — meetings, calls, interruptions.
  That's why safety has to be built into the daily routine, not treated as an extra.
- Each level of management influences safety differently — top management sets tone and resources; middle management translates policy into plans; operational management turns those plans into practice.
  The strength of an OHS system depends on how well these three levels connect."
- "Quick question: In your own organisations, which level do you think has the strongest influence on safety culture — top, middle, or front line?"

Mintzberg's Managerial Roles

- **Interpersonal Roles:**
  - Figurehead, Leader, Liaison
- **Informational Roles:**
  - Monitor, Disseminator, Spokesperson
- **Decisional Roles:**
  - Entrepreneur, Disturbance Handler, Resource Allocator, Negotiator

Case Study – Mintzberg's Roles in Action

Breakout Rooms or Open Discussion

Scenario: A chemical spill occurs at a manufacturing plant. How do the top, middle, and lower-level managers respond based on Mintzberg's roles?

Group Discussion Points:

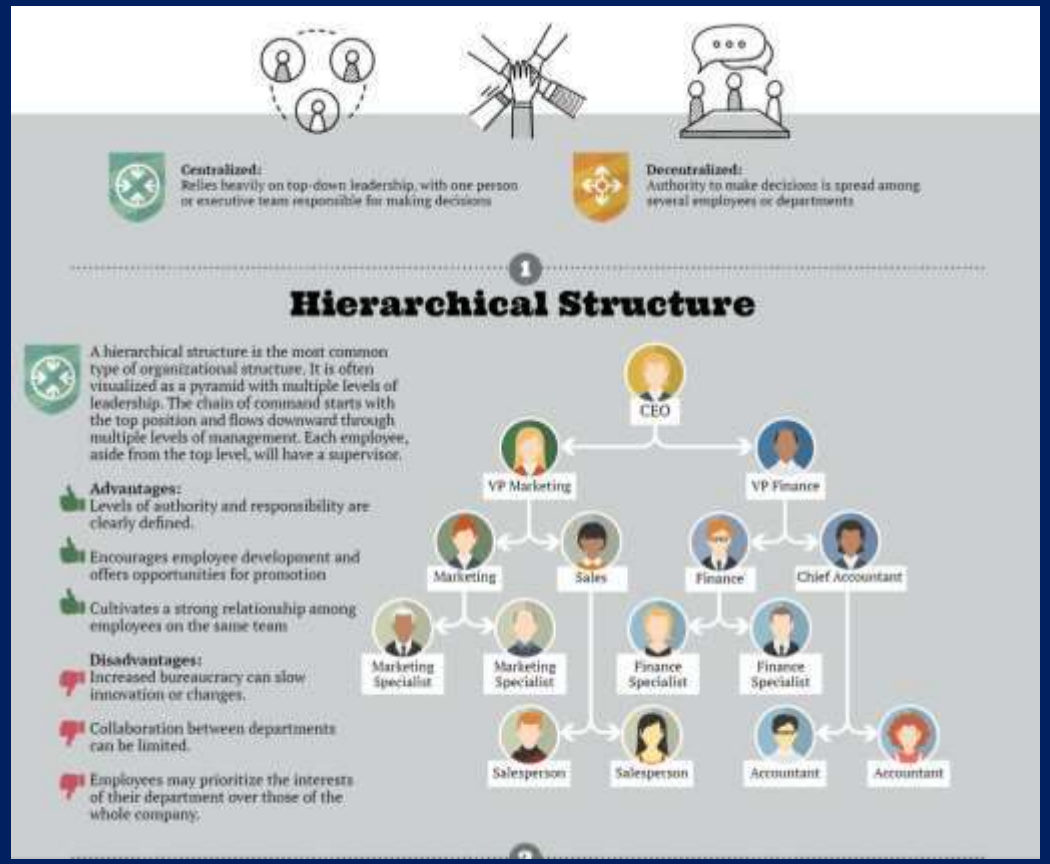
- **Group 1: Top Management**
  - How would the CEO or top executives handle the overall situation?
  - What Mintzberg roles would be most prominent?
  - How would they manage external communication and resource distribution?
- **Group 2: Middle Management**
  - How does middle management coordinate between top and lower levels?
  - What information would they monitor and how would they distribute it?
  - What roles would middle management adopt, and how would they support both sides?
- **Group 3: Lower Management**
  - How would lower-level managers lead workers on the ground?
  - What immediate actions would they take in response to the spill?
  - How would they allocate resources and ensure safety compliance?

Break

"The bureaucratic structure goes hand in hand with the concentration of administrative means of production." — Max Weber (1920)

- "Weber saw bureaucracy as the foundation of order and accountability — it's what allows large organisations to run smoothly.
- In OHS, structure can both help and hinder. Hierarchies give us clear reporting, but sometimes too many layers slow decision-making.
- Matrix systems encourage teamwork but can blur accountability for safety.
- The key is ensuring safety accountability is *never lost in the chart*."

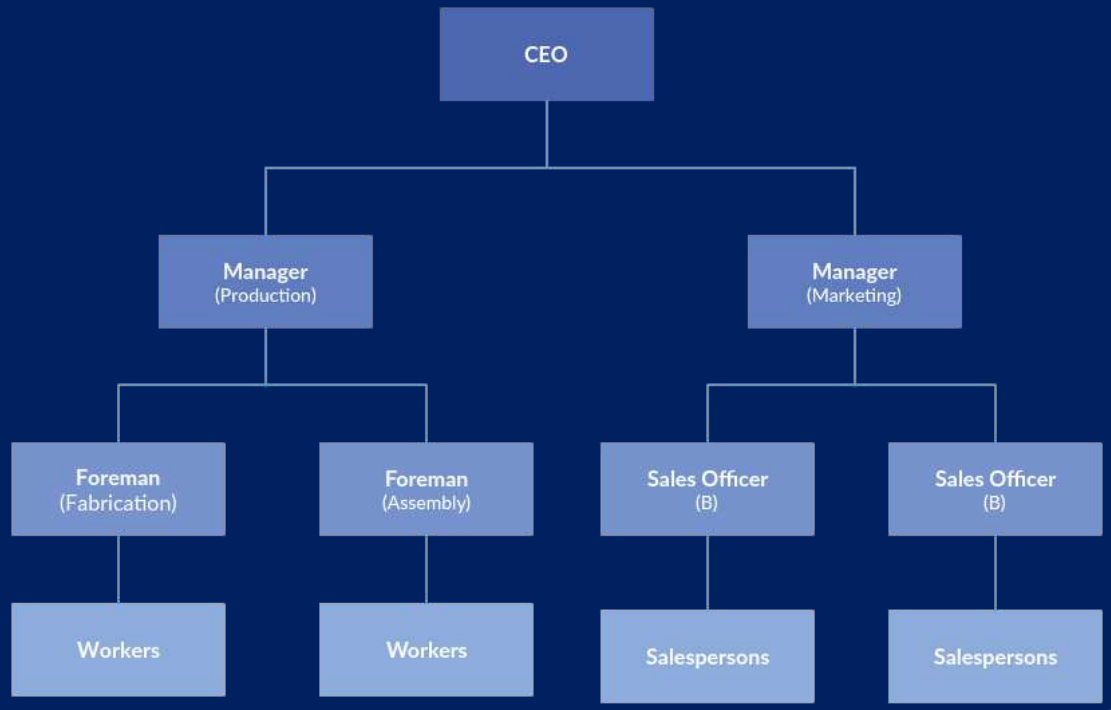
Organisational Structure



- **Types of Organizational Structures:**
  - Hierarchical, Functional, Divisional, Matrix, Team-Based
- **Key Elements:**
  - Departmentalisation, Chain of Command, Span of Control

Hierarchical Structure

- Clear chain of command and defined authority.
- Decision-making flows top-down.
- High accountability but slower adaptability.
- Works well for compliance-driven systems (e.g. OHS policies, audits).



Functional Structure

- Groups people by similar expertise (HR, Engineering, Operations, Safety).
- Clear departmental specialisation.
- Encourages depth of knowledge but can cause “silos”.
- Coordination between departments becomes critical for OHS.

Divisional Structure

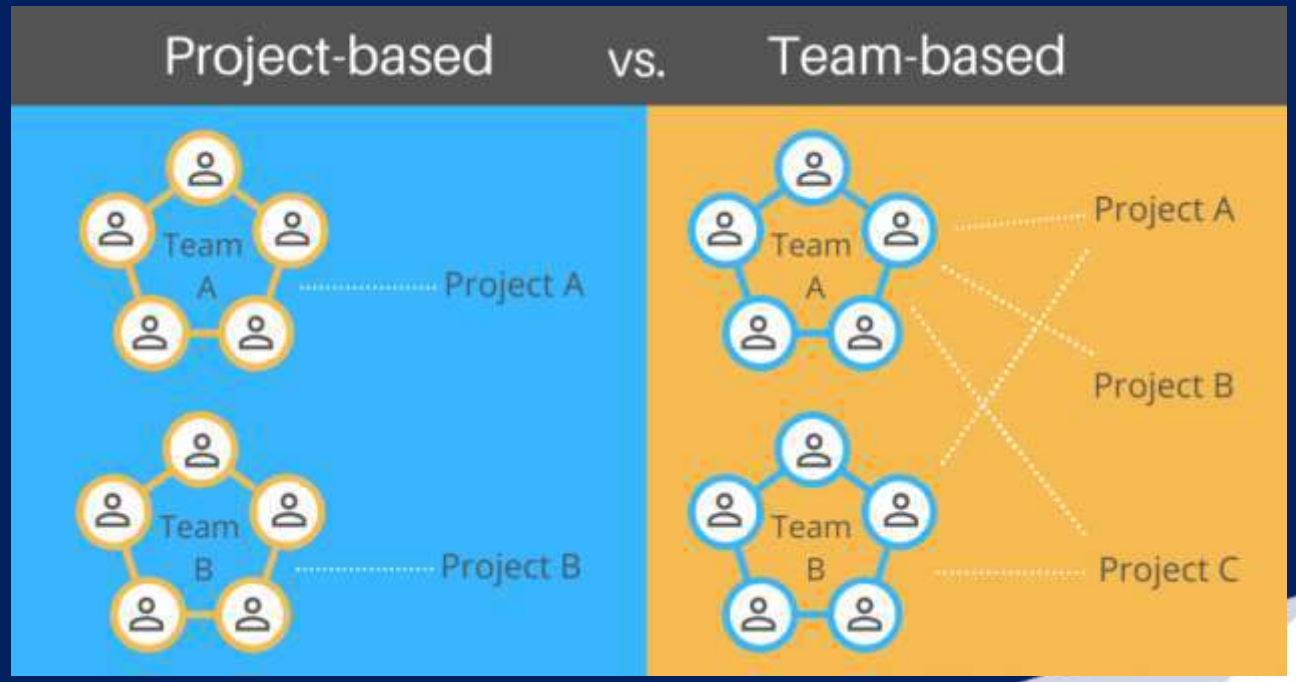
- Organisation split by products, regions, or projects.
- Each division operates semi-independently.
- Focuses on results, flexibility, and client or product needs.
- OHS consistency depends on corporate-level oversight.

Matrix Structure

- Dual reporting lines (functional + project).
- Encourages collaboration and resource sharing.
- Can blur lines of accountability if not clearly managed.
- Excellent for multi-disciplinary safety teams — if roles are defined.

Team-Based Structure

- Flat structure built around cross-functional teams.
- Emphasises collaboration and flexibility.
- Fast decisions and high ownership, but needs a strong safety culture.
- Works best where empowerment and trust are embedded.



Real-World Example: Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

- Real-World Example: The Deepwater Horizon oil spill and management failure.

- Discussion points: How could better leadership, organisation, and control have prevented or mitigated the disaster?

Deepwater Horizon – Video & report

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NQ8LehUWSE

Investigation Report: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-OILCOMMISSION/pdf/GPO-OILCOMMISSION.pdf

Deepwater Horizon: look beyond operator error

- 20 April 2010: the Macondo well blowout killed 11 workers and led to a major oil spill.
- Investigations identified interacting technical, operational and management failures across multiple organisations.
- Consider interpretation of the negative-pressure test, well-barrier decisions, contractor interfaces and risk communication.
- Discussion: Which decisions reflected planning, leadership, organisational and assurance weaknesses?
- Lesson: multiple failed barriers and management decisions can combine to produce catastrophic consequences.

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Discussion

- **What are your thoughts?**
  - Investigations identified interacting technical, operational and management failures across multiple organisations.
  - Consider interpretation of the negative-pressure test, well-barrier decisions, contractor interfaces and risk communication.

- **Biggest failure in Management?**
  - **Planning?**
  - **Leadership?**
  - **Controlling?**

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