

AS 4801—2000

Australian Standard™



Occupational
health and safety
management systems —
Specification with guidance for use



Standards Australia

This Australian Standard was prepared by Committee SF/1 – Occupational Health and Safety Management. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 17 January 2000 and published on 5 February 2000.

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- Australian Association of Certification Bodies
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Construction Policy Steering Committee NSW
- Department of Labour New Zealand
- Department of Mines and Energy, Qld
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- Quality Society of Australasia
- Safety Institute of Australia
- Telstra Corporation
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- University of New South Wales
- Victorian WorkCover Authority
- WorkCover New South Wales
- WorkSafe Western Australia

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Preface

This Standard was prepared by the Joint Standards Australia Committee SF/1 – Occupational Health and Safety Management. This Standard is the result of consensus among representatives on the Joint Committee to produce it as an Australian Standard.

The objective of this Standard is to set auditable criteria for an occupational health and safety management system. The Standard is a specification that aims to encompass the best elements of such systems already widely used in Australia and New Zealand. It includes guidance on how those criteria may be achieved. The Standard should not be relied upon to ensure compliance with all legal and other obligations.

The Committee agreed to issuing an Australian Standard, with the objective of producing a Joint Australian/New Zealand Standard when a full revision of AS/NZS 4804:1997, *Occupational health and safety management systems—General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques* was complete.

Compliance with this Standard may not necessarily meet your OHS legal obligations.

The term *informative* has been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. An *informative* appendix is only for information and guidance.

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Foreword

The adoption and implementation of a range of effective occupational health and safety (OHS) management actions in a systematic manner can contribute to optimal outcomes for all interested parties. Organizations of all kinds and sizes adopt a systematic approach to managing OHS and develop OHS management systems (OHSMS) within the context of:

- The general growth of concern from all interested parties about OHS matters.
- Changes to legislation.
- Other measures to foster sustained OHS improvement.

There are many reasons why organizations implement an OHSMS including legal imperatives, ethical concerns, industrial relations considerations and to improve financial performance. Implementation of an effective OHSMS should, however, primarily lead to a reduction of workplace illness and injury, minimizing the costs associated with workplace accidents. OHSMS are also used by some organizations to demonstrate, internally and in some cases externally (via self-declaration or certification/registration as appropriate), that they are systematically controlling the OHS risks/hazards to all persons affected by the organization's activities, products or services.

For organizations wishing to implement, develop, improve, or in some cases audit an OHSMS, a pair of linked and complementary Standards is available to provide guidance. AS/NZS 4804, *Occupational health and safety management systems—General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques* is the primary Standard relevant to all organizations and provides general guidance on how to implement, develop and/or improve an OHSMS. This Standard (AS 4801) establishes an audit framework principally for use by third party bodies that have been asked by an organization to conduct an independent audit of the organization's OHSMS. The framework can also be used as a reference point for internal auditing procedures. It is envisaged that not all users of the primary Standard AS/NZS 4804 will need to use AS 4801 as illustrated below.



AS/NZS 4804

AS 4801

AS/NZS 4804 provides general guidance on:

- How to set up an OHSMS.
- How to continually improve an OHSMS.
- The resources required to set up and continually improve an OHSMS.

The AS/NZS 4804 guidelines describe a systematic management approach that can assist in both meeting legal requirements and lead to sustained improvement in OHS performance. These guidelines can assist organizations establish their own OHSMS and they also apply to any existing OHSMS. The guidelines do not prescribe the type or format or style of OHSMS that should be used. Rather, AS/NZS 4804 contains guidance for organizations of any size or type seeking to develop and implement an OHSMS, or improve an existing system, so that it will:

- be appropriate for that organization;
- be integrated with other systems and core functions of the organization;
- improve the organization's overall performance; and
- assist the organization to meet its legal responsibilities.

Injury management is an important element of any system but has been referred to only peripherally in AS/NZS 4804. The reader is referred elsewhere, e.g. to National Occupational Health and Safety Commission's *Guidance note for the best practice rehabilitation management of occupational injuries and disease*, NOHSC:3021 (1995).

AS 4801 is a specification Standard that establishes a framework primarily for enabling independent external audits and reviews of an organization's OHSMS, but it can also be used as a framework for internal audits. Many organizations already undertake internal audits or reviews to assess the effectiveness of their OHSMS. Some organizations may also seek independent third party assurances that an organization they are proposing to do business with has effective systems in place to control their OHS. To be effective, and to contribute to ongoing improvement in OHS performance, audits need to be conducted by competent persons within a structured management system and integrated with overall management activity. AS 4801 specifies the framework against which external auditors will assess an OHSMS. However, these audits and reviews would not be sufficient to provide an organization with the assurance that its performance not only meets, but will continue to meet, its ethical, legal and policy requirements.

These linked Standards have been written to be applicable to all types and sizes of organizations and to be generic enough to accommodate diverse geographical, cultural and social conditions, as well as the multiplicity of OHS legal jurisdictions. Thus two organizations carrying out similar activities but having different OHSMS and performances may both conform to the requirements established in AS 4801. However, any effective OHSMS needs to reflect OHS issues in the organization in which it is used. The basis of the approach is shown in Figure 1.

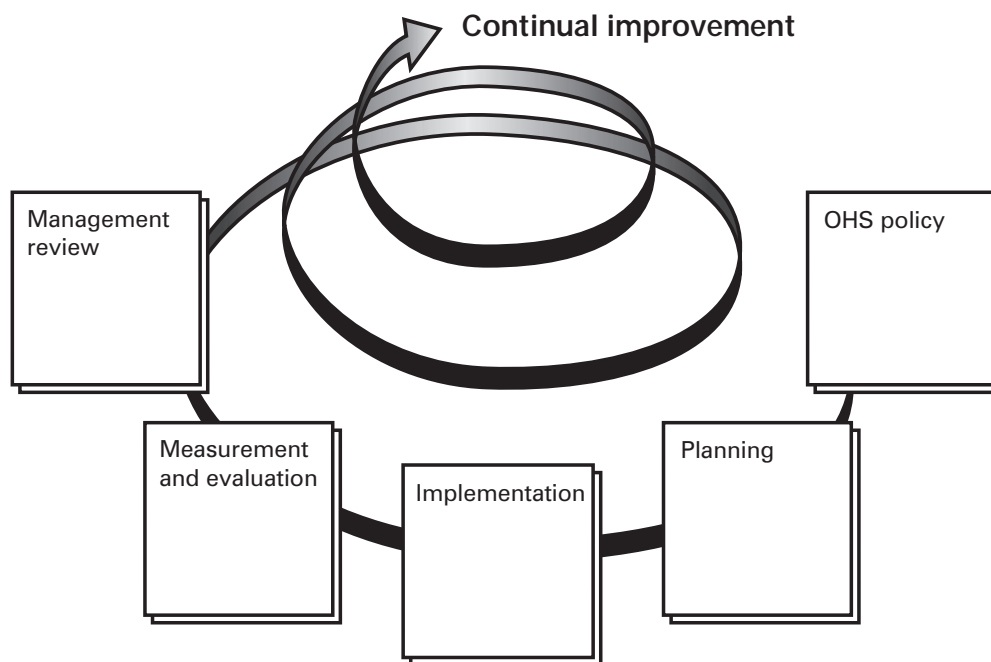


Figure 1 OHS Management System Model

The success of an OHSMS depends on commitment from all levels and functions within an organization, especially from senior management. An effective OHSMS can assist an organization to:

- set out OHS policy and objectives;
- establish, assess and review the effectiveness of procedures which give effect to OHS policy and objectives;
- achieve conformance with OHS policy and objectives of the organization; and
- demonstrate such conformance to others (via self-declaration or certification/registration as appropriate).

The overall aim of these linked Standards is to support the achievement of the highest levels of OHS performance through systematic elimination or reduction of workplace risks. Both AS 4801 and AS/NZS 4804 are intended to provide organizations with the elements of an effective OHSMS which can be integrated with other management requirements, to assist organizations to achieve OHS as well as other social and economic goals. These Standards are not intended to be used to create trade barriers nor change an organization's legal obligations. They are voluntary, useful tools for business and governments to use as little or as much as, they choose.

Legislation in Australia may adopt a hazard/risk management approach and may also emphasize a preferred order of control methods (often called a hierarchy of controls) which should be implemented in the workplace. The various jurisdictions define this hierarchy in different ways. Readers should note this and will need to ensure that the Standards are used to suit compliance requirements in their jurisdictions.

The emphasis in much legislation and in these Standards is for organizations to develop and implement control actions which, wherever possible, eliminate hazards or isolate people from the hazard. Where this is not possible, work activities should be planned and controlled through administrative means to the extent necessary to prevent injury and illness. In order to achieve these objectives an organization should encourage the implementation of the best practicable methods and technology consistent with the legal obligations to ensure that workplaces are safe and healthy.

These Standards share common management systems principles with environmental management systems Standards such as AS/NZS ISO 14001 and quality systems Standards like AS/NZS ISO 9001, and encourage the integration of such management system elements. However, AS 4801 as well as AS/NZS 4804 are more aligned to risk management philosophies and methods as set out in AS/NZS 4360, *Risk management* than are quality management systems standards.

The requirements set out in AS 4801 and AS/NZS 4804 do not need to be implemented independently of existing OHSMS elements, whether integrated or not. In some cases, existing OHSMS elements will meet the requirements. An organization may elect to continue to use any management system framework, structure, or audit tool as required. There may be no need to change an existing OHSMS program or audit framework. AS/NZS 4804 as well as AS 4801 can be applied to any OHSMS.

STANDARDS AUSTRALIA**Australian Standard****Occupational health and safety management systems—Specification with guidance for use****1 Scope**

This Standard specifies requirements for an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS), to enable an organization to formulate a policy and objectives taking into account legislative requirements and information about OHS risks. It applies to those OHS hazards and related risks over which the organization may exert control and over which it can be expected to have an influence. It does not state specific OHS performance outcomes.

This Standard is applicable to any organization that wishes to:

- a) implement, maintain and improve an OHSMS;
- b) assure itself of its conformance with its stated OHS policy;
- c) demonstrate such conformance to others;
- d) seek certification/registration of its OHSMS by an external organization; or
- e) make a self-determination and declaration of conformance with the Standard.

All the requirements in the Standard are intended to be incorporated into any OHSMS. The extent of the application will depend on such factors as the OHS policy of the organization, the nature of its activities and the conditions in which it operates.

Effective implementation of an OHS management system should seek to ensure the organization complies with relevant OHS legislation, standards and codes of practice. However, the implementation of any of the requirements of this Standard, whether or not the organization has gained certification from a third-party certification body or is otherwise recognized, does not in any way assure compliance with legal requirements, or other obligations placed upon the organization by a statutory body. Hence, the implementation, either actual or intended, of this Standard, or parts thereof, would not preclude any action by a statutory body.

NOTES

- 1) The Standard also provides informative guidance on the use of the specification in Appendix A, a bibliography for further reading in Appendix B, and a correspondence of the requirements of this Standard with AS/NZS ISO 14001 and AS/NZS ISO 9001 in Appendix C.
- 2) For ease of use, the clauses of the specification and Appendix A have related numbers.