

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDITS

SAFETY AUDITS

The HSE publication HS(G) 65 *Successful Health and Safety Management* and more recently the British Standards Institute's BS 8800 *A Guide to Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems* go a long way in identifying a model around which an effective management system can be developed. A vital element of the model is an audit which enables organisations to identify improvements and feed into the review process to enable improvement to take place.

WHY CHOOSE QSA

There are two main recognised independent audit protocols for health and safety management systems. The International Safety Rating System (ISRS), marketed by DNV (Det Norske Veritas) and The Quality safety Audit (QSA) produced by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). ISRS is an international accreditation based around European legislation. It is primarily used by organisations to demonstrate safety in the international arena. RoSPA's QSA audit is based specifically on UK legislation and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance. For an organisation like Derby Homes the QSA audit would be the most appropriate of these systems.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF QSA INCLUDE:

It measures performance against the guidance of the HSE and BSI.

The results provided are quantitative to facilitate benchmarking.

It encourages progressive improvements in health and safety.

It is universal in application.

It embodies the principles of risk management which have formed the basis of legislation and therefore tests compliance.

It is supported by the training and management development resources of RoSPA.

It features both paper documentation and software recording systems.

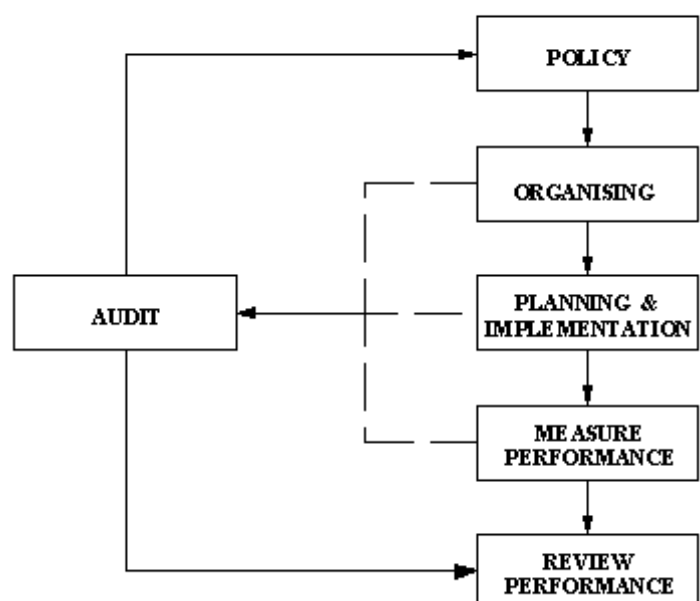
It follows the principles of auditing set down in BS 7229 for quality auditing.

HOW DOES THE SYSTEM WORK?

It is essential that the audit is carried out by a competent, RoSPA trained auditor. The audit examines an organisation's safety management system against the elements listed in HS(G) 65 and BS 8800 and summarised in the diagram (left).

The question set leads the auditor through a detailed examination of both documented procedures and the way activities are actually being controlled in practice. The use of pre-set questions enables an audit team to operate at different sites and at different times and still to come to

Key Elements of Successful Health and Safety



comparable conclusions with regard to the management of health and safety. A numerical score is allocated to each question and all the points are awarded for a yes answer so there is no subjectivity in scoring. The points awarded reflect the degree of importance of the question. A total score is obtained for each element and this is used to calculate a score which represents the overall performance of the organisation. This score, which is called the health and safety performing rating or HSPR, is a single figure between 1 and 100 which can be used to assist in benchmarking performance.

Under the heading of Organising, the Audit examines the way in which responsibilities within the safety management system have been allocated to policy makers, planners and implementers and that there is supporting documentation for these activities.

In essence, the QSA system adopts the HS(G) 65 principles of performance standards as its base. Procedures which describe how an organisation can meet the required performance standards fall into two main categories:

Those which describe how the organisation will develop its safety culture under the heading of the four Cs.

Control

Co-operation

Communication

Competence

Those which describe how the organisation will control risks and relate to:

hazard identification

risk assessment

risk control

implementation of risk control measures

maintaining risk control measures

In addition to addressing the risk assessment process in its own right QSA also examines performance in 10 key sets of risk control measures which are common to all organisations.

WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS BE INTERESTED IN SAFETY AUDITING?

An audit is defined by the HSE as:

' the structured process of collecting independent information on the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the total safety management system and drawing up plans for corrective action. ' HSE- HS(G) 65.

To identify the most effective way to bring about improvement in the management of health and safety within an organisation it is important to know the starting point.

Strengths and weaknesses will be identified and appropriate solutions to promote improvement can be devised.

The principle of auditing has been established for a long time in both financial management and quality assurance. The importance of audit as a tool in safety management was recognised by Desmond Fennel QC who, in his report on the King's Cross disaster, stated:

' It is essential that a system should be devised whereby safety of operation can be the subject of audit in the same way as efficiency and economy. If the internal audit has become a yardstick by which financial performance is measured only by such a tool can the board, and hence the general public be satisfied that all aspects of safety are maintained at the right level. '

The pattern of health and safety legislation is quite clear since the introduction of the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations* 1992. Employers are required to create safety management systems which need to be supported by documented procedures if they are to be effective. To test how effective the system is a thorough audit has to be conducted. Effective and efficient management of an employer's legal obligations will ensure that valuable resources are not wasted on the wrong solutions and ensure that legal compliance can be achieved.