



Health and Safety Management

for small businesses



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The chances are you didn't think too much about health and safety when you started your business. But people getting ill or hurt because of work is no good for you, them, or the business. So it makes sense to look out for your people and take a bit of time to really understand where the risks are and what you can do about them.

Managing health and safety doesn't have to be hard, expensive, time-consuming or involve loads of paperwork. It's easier than you think. For many businesses, taking a few basic practical steps may be all that's needed to protect people. And those same steps can

help protect the future success of your business, too.

This simple guide will help you get started and introduces the idea of health and safety management systems.

WHY DO I NEED TO MANAGE HEALTH AND SAFETY?

It just makes sense.

First off, we expect to make it home from work in the same sort of shape as when we started the day.

Secondly: it's the law.

Finally, healthy workers don't go off sick and no injuries means no disruption. Simply speaking, a business that looks after its workers' health and safety gets more done.



THE LAW

The basis of British health and safety law is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

This sets out the duty of care employers have to employees and others that their work activities could affect.

A really important part of UK law is the idea of 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

What does this mean? Basically, you don't have to break the bank to make sure no-one ever gets a

paper cut and you don't need to make your workplace tsunami-proof if you're hundreds of miles from the sea. If something is technically impossible, or the time, trouble or cost is completely crazy for managing a risk you're considering, the law doesn't expect you to do it.

What the law requires is what good management and a sound understanding of their business would lead most employers to do anyway: look at the risks and take sensible steps to tackle them.

What is an

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

It's a framework for managing health and safety right across your business, instead of dealing with one risk at a time. It gives a way of working that means plans, actions, checks and improvements work together in a way that can be built into the general day-to-day running of your business.

Health and safety management systems are not required by law. Some management system standards actually ask you to go beyond what the law requires - so it's up to you to decide whether going beyond basic legal requirements is appropriate for your business and if you will benefit from implementing a structured management system.

This booklet introduces many of the ways of working set out in the international standard known as ISO 45001, and can help you decide if a formal management system like that is right for you. Regardless of whether you decide to go for a management system that meets all of the requirements in ISO 45001 or not, adopting some of the ideas can help drive a positive, safe and healthy culture in your workplace.



How do I do it?

WHERE TO START?

There's a world of jargon, acronyms, experts and schemes out there using language that most normal people don't speak. Don't worry. It's not as hard as it seems. A health and safety management system can be simple and should be based on your own needs, no matter what type of business you've got.

The basic framework of a health and safety management system asks you to:

Understand your context – who you are, what you do, where you do it and who could get hurt

Take the lead on making your workplace safe and healthy, and get your workers involved

Plan – decide what you need to do and how you're going to do it;

Decide if you need extra help

Do what you say you're going to do

Check how well it's working

Fix problems and look for ways to make what you are doing even more effective

Although a formal management system requires that certain things are documented, always remember that **it's managing your risks well that's important, not the amount of paperwork you create**. What counts is how well you are protecting people and keeping your workers safe and healthy.

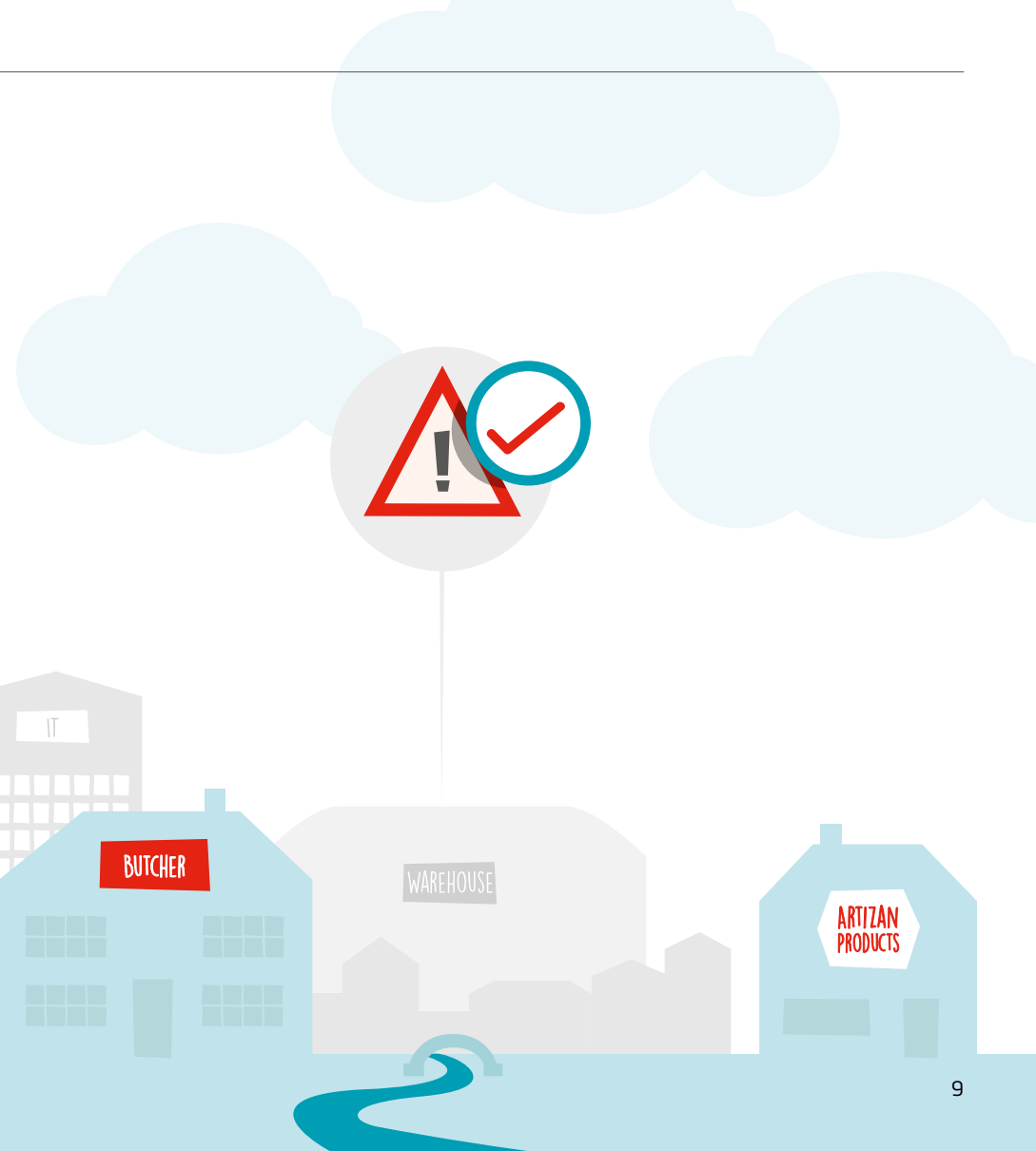
ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Context is everything. Your situation is different from anyone else's in one way or another, and understanding all the different things that can affect you is the key to getting health and safety management right.

Knowing your own situation is key to keeping your system simple and in proportion to the risks you're trying to control.

For example, a multi-national organization can have different sites, departments and activities, and the processes used to identify issues probably

reflect this complexity. A smaller business is often less complex, so how its context and risks are assessed can be simpler, too. It's important to remember, though, that size isn't everything. Small businesses can be complex or high risk just as large businesses can be simple or low risk.



WHO CARES? THE PEOPLE PART

All sorts of people have an interest in how you manage health and safety in your business. Some are more important than others, but if they can affect what you do, or you can affect their health or safety, you need to pay attention.

The most important group are your own workers. Listen to them, talk to them and involve them in decisions about health and safety management. These are the people with the most to gain – or lose – and they may have a good understanding of the risks they face day to day. They know what actually goes on in the workplace. By getting them involved you're going to get buy-in and your system has a much better chance of working well.

There are also other possibly less obvious groups who really matter:

- **Your supply chain:** sometimes contracts ask for evidence that you are managing your health and safety, whether through a recognised standard like ISO 45001 or through other evidence (e.g. sector schemes, policies or processes). On the flip side, you are more likely to be seen as a good business to work with if you're seen to care about the health and safety of your contractors and take the time to involve them in managing risks.
- **Customers:** once upon a time, customers might not have cared so much about how what they buy affects the people making or providing it. Today they do. Businesses with a good health and safety record build a better reputation, and this always appeals to the ethical consumer.
- **Insurers:** they sometimes set specific conditions for managing health and safety and might look for evidence of how you're meeting those conditions.
- **Regulators:** depending on what your business does, you might get a visit from a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or Local Authority regulator; they may consider your management system when looking at how you've demonstrated compliance with health and safety law



HSE (or the Health and Safety Executive) and Local Authorities are the national health and safety regulators for almost all workplaces in England, Scotland and Wales. They provide health and safety guidance, inspect workplaces and when necessary investigate serious incidents. They may also take enforcement action against those who have not complied with the law. LAs regulate workplaces in retail, wholesale distribution and warehousing, hotel and catering, office work, and the consumer/leisure industries. Otherwise, with a very few exceptions HSE is the regulator.

SO, HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

In a small business the easiest way to get people involved is to talk to them. Ask questions, listen to the answers, encourage suggestions and feedback.

Make sure people know it is okay to talk about things that can – or have – gone wrong.

Get people trained so they know what is and isn't safe or could make them ill and what to do if someone gets hurt or becomes ill. Get online and make use of the free advice from reputable sources (e.g. the national health and safety regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)) If that doesn't meet your needs, you may need to consider more formal training.

And don't forget those workers who aren't actually in the building when you talk about things. People based at home, people on the road, the night shift: everyone should be part of this conversation. So use the wonders of modern technology: set up a WhatsApp group, use social media pages, email, conference calls. It doesn't matter how you do it, so long as it works. And don't forget, this can be part of the 'paperwork' that demonstrates your management system is working.

When it comes to your supply chain and other people outside of your business don't assume you know what their needs, wants and expectations are.

Check:
visit their websites,
pick up the phone, or
arrange a meeting
– whatever works best for both sides.

And don't forget to stay in touch.

None of this is a one-time thing. Needs and expectations change and so do the people involved, so keep an eye out and keep talking.



HAVE YOU GOT A PLAN?

The goal of health and safety management is to protect people; to do this well you need to break it down into exactly what you want to achieve, who's going to do it, how and by when. You, as the boss, should take responsibility, set a direction and make sure there is someone with the right skills, knowledge and experience to help you lead the way.

The people at the top of your business – the owners, senior managers, big decision makers – need to take health and safety seriously and be seen to be doing that. If it's at the heart of how your business is run, your workers will know it matters and a positive culture will develop.

The law states that as an employer, you must use someone 'competent' to help you meet your health and safety duties. A competent person is someone with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to advise what you have to do to manage health and safety. But this doesn't necessarily mean external expert advice.

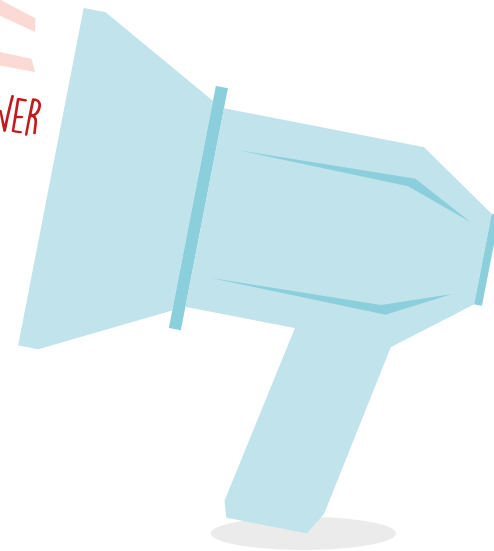
So, that means you can:

- do this yourself,
- get one or more of your workers to take on the role; or
- find someone from outside your business – or all three if you need to.

If you do decide that you need external advice (e.g. if you have to manage complex risks), the most reliable source of good-quality health and safety advice is the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register (OSHCR).

"YOU'LL NEED A HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY"

THE LAW STATES THAT IF YOU HAVE FEWER THAN FIVE EMPLOYEES, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WRITE DOWN YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY. SIMPLY BEING ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IT IS ENOUGH



Describing how you'll manage health and safety in your business will let your staff and others know about your commitment to health and safety. This is called your health and safety policy.

Your policy doesn't need to be complicated or time-consuming. To help you, HSE has created templates you can download and complete. HSE also provides an example health and safety policy to give you an idea of what to include.

A policy will only be effective if you and your workers follow it, and you keep it up to date, so that it stays relevant as things change.

Making it too hard is likely to be counter-productive - keep it realistic and achievable.

For a management system to be effective, your workers not only need to be aware of it, they need to understand what it's trying to do, how it affects them and how they can affect it.

You'll also need to make sure your workers are made aware of relevant hazards and related risks that can cause injury or ill-health.

Think about what, in your business, might cause harm to people, and decide whether you've done enough to prevent or minimise the chances of that harm happening. This is known as managing your risks, and starts with risk assessment. You're probably already taking steps to protect your workers, but a risk assessment will tell you how you need to do more.

The law states that if you have fewer than five employees you don't have to write anything down – but you'll still need to be able to explain your risk assessment to anyone who needs to know, especially employees.



Assessing risks doesn't have to involve huge amounts of paperwork. It's just about identifying sensible ways to control the risks in your workplace.

You should record the more serious things whether on paper or on your computer or wherever suits you, but don't worry about recording all of the smaller, everyday risks. Keep it simple and focus on controlling the risks.

HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

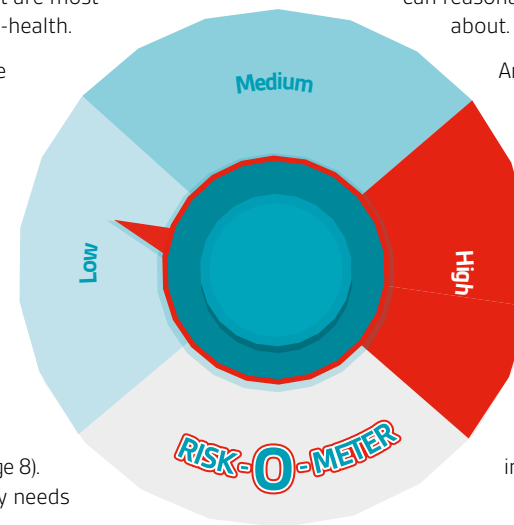
A good starting point is to walk around your workplace, talk to your staff and look for anything that can harm people – the hazards. Then think about the risk – what are the chances (high, medium, low) of somebody getting hurt or being made ill by each hazard - and how serious the harm would be.

A management system should concentrate on the 'real' risks – those that are most likely to cause injury or ill-health.

to include the risks you (or your 'competent person') can reasonably be expected to know about.

Once you've identified the risks and looked at the various ways you can control them, you should put the appropriate measures in place.

You aren't expected to remove all risks (that would be impossible) but you should control them so far as reasonably practicable (remember that phrase? We used it earlier – see page 8). Your risk assessment only needs



Any paperwork or electronic record you produce should help you manage your risks and let other people know about them. HSE has created material to help you, including an online risk assessment tool and example risk assessments.

And don't forget, when you're planning changes, to consider ways of improving health and safety.

DOING IT – OPERATIONS

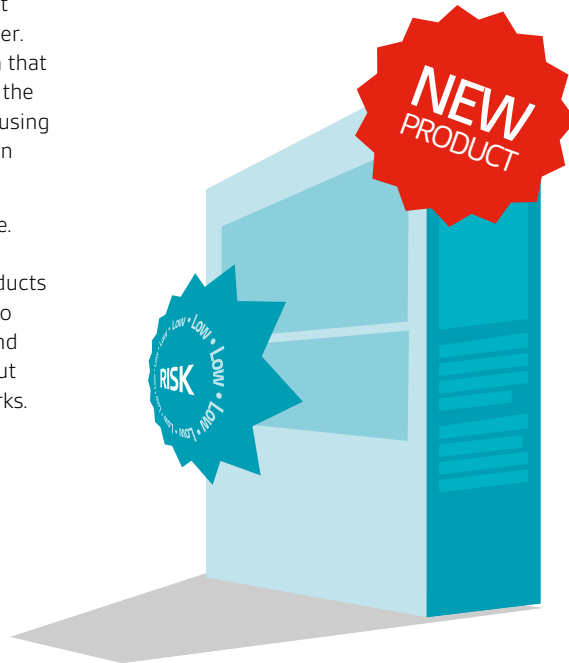
A health and safety management system asks you to apply a 'hierarchy of controls' when looking to control your risks.

What is a 'hierarchy of controls'?
Sounds technical but isn't!

It's a step by step way of either getting rid of hazards (things that can hurt people) completely or reducing the chance of something bad happening or how much they can hurt someone. The best thing to do is to get rid of the hazard altogether. This is at the top of the hierarchy. Underneath that are other things you can do - each step down the list is less effective than the one above it, but using several of the steps at the same time can often reduce risks well.

It's important to remember that things change. Trained staff might leave, you might change premises, or you might start making new products or introduce new ways of working. You need to make sure you are on top of these changes and how they affect your risks and then think about whether how you manage those risks still works.

Depending on what your business does, you might also need to think about how you buy products and services and how that can affect the health and safety of both your own workers and the people providing them when they are in your workplace.



The hierarchy of controls, explained.

Type of control	Example
hazard elimination	buying pre-cut building materials instead of cutting on-site;
substitution	swapping the dangerous for safe or less dangerous; e.g. using water-based paint rather than solvent-based paint,
engineering controls	putting guards on machine or using local exhaust ventilation systems;
administrative controls	using standard operating instructions or rotating work and workers to reduce effects such as repetitive strain injuries, or loss of concentration due to boredom;
personal protective equipment (PPE)	safety shoes, hearing protection

It's important to understand that different businesses or contractors will manage health and safety in different ways – it's all about context, remember (see p8). So be careful not to demand too much or to expect other people to do things the same way that you do. Making sure that the risks are managed is what is important, not a particular system or way of doing things.

Remember too, that some changes in the workplace can change your risks – e.g. machinery supplied to you or contractors working on your site – but you only need to do something different if the change really increases the risk.

You'll also need to think about what happens if someone does get ill or hurt. Do you have a first aid kit? Do your workers know what to do if something happens? Who takes charge? Who should be told about it? Do you need make a formal report under accident reporting laws (RIDDOR) or due to other requirements, for example a contract?

If your business is complex or high risk, you might need to think about developing a formal response plan which people know about, can find and fully understand.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THINGS

As the boss, you should know what's going on.

How do you know if things are going well - or badly? Do you just feel it in your bones, or do you have evidence to back those feelings up?

The chances are that you already have ways of checking the important stuff, whether it's financial targets or health and safety performance – but it pays to have a proper system in place to check how you are doing regularly.

A management system is based on a simple circle. Plan. Do. Check. Act. Plan ahead, do what you

planned to do, check it's working, take action if it's not. And remember that this is not something you do just once. It's a cycle that you should repeat, as and when you need to.

It's not as much work as it sounds: we all live this way all the time. Whether it comes to what we are going to eat, or how we are getting to work, or how we go about saving for something. Think about it - if you had a meal that you didn't enjoy, you wouldn't just have the same thing again. You'd automatically do something different next time.



IMPROVEMENT / MONITORING AND MEASURING

This needn't be hard work - just do what works for you.

In some businesses measurement has to be precise, recorded and regularly reviewed, e.g. if you're dealing with chemicals, explosives, or potentially dangerous manufacturing equipment. In other businesses, like an office or small shop, it can be less exact. At home, we all know what it's like to monitor progress against plans as we go about our day to day activities (how's the washing doing, will the dinner be cooked in time for when the kids get in?).

Doing it for health and safety is just the same.

It makes sense to monitor things as a matter of routine (are spills cleaned up quickly and properly? Are people wearing their safety goggles? Is the mood in the workplace good or are there signs of stress? But you only need to measure what's important. Are the rules being followed? Are accidents being reported? Are there more of them or less? Are they serious or minor? Do we have a problem with long-term sickness absence?

Continual improvement?

Continual improvement is the 'act' part of the cycle that management systems are based on (remember Plan-Do-Check-Act?). This doesn't mean you need to change things that are working or constantly worry about putting in some new health and safety rule.

Just look for ways you can improve health and safety at work. If it's practical and affordable – and will actually make a difference – give it a go. It could be as simple as getting the first aider to share what they know with other workers or adding health and safety to team meeting agendas.

It can be helpful to stand back once in a while from the day-to-day and take a long hard look at your business from every angle. Get a big picture view of those things you've been measuring, and do some cross-checking. What does the evidence tell you? Is your system working? Are you managing your risks well enough?

Ask questions. Listen to the answers.

Ask people's opinions.

And think: when something went wrong (any near miss accidents, any patterns or clusters of illness or injuries), was it avoidable? Did you put things right quickly, effectively and to the satisfaction of those affected? Did you put something in place to stop it happening again?

Doing this helps you think in a focused way about things you can do to improve and to make sure your management system is working.

SOME THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Common failings

On the ground

Getting things out of proportion. Remember, managing health and safety is often just about understanding your business and using common sense. If your management system feels too complex or disconnected from what's actually going on 'on the ground' – then it probably is!

Job done

Thinking that things will never change, or that having established a management system, it's "job done". Always remember that a management system is a cycle: Plan. Do. Check. Act. And keep on doing those things.

Complicated paperwork

Having complicated paperwork that doesn't reflect health and safety on the ground. It has to work with your business; otherwise it's just wasting time and money.

Expert advice

Believing you need 'expert advice': you may not. In low risk environments, more often than not you or someone in your own business is best placed to do this.

It's voluntary

Thinking that you have to use standards. They're voluntary, not the law. It's for you to decide if it works for you

Assessment

Thinking that a management system standard is the only way to show other people, such as customers, that you are on top of health and safety in your business. For low risk activities a health and safety policy and/or a risk assessment can often be enough.

Taking things further

This document provides information on the basics of good health and safety management. Further advice on this and what the law requires is available on HSE's website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/abc/index.htm>.

If you like the idea of using a standard like ISO 45001 to help you manage your health and safety but have never done this sort of thing before, take it slowly and get to grips with who's who and what's what.

Just remember, even if you decide to give ISO 45001 a go, you don't need to meet all the requirements at once, you don't need to change everything you already do and you don't need to rush into certification.

Below is an explanation of some of the terms used in the world of standardization to help you understand better.

Certification

Getting a certificate means an outsider (auditor) comes into your business and checks you are doing what you say you are doing. If you say you are meeting ISO 45001 requirements the auditor will use those requirements to check against. If you pass the audit, you get the certificate. If you've missed something or something is going wrong, you'll be told there is a nonconformity. Fix it. Get it re-checked. Then you'll get your certificate.

Accreditation

People confuse certification and accreditation. You can't be accredited to ISO 45001, you can only be

certified. The certification body (CB) that audits you can be accredited. This means they've been checked over and carry out audits the way they are meant to. Most countries have a national accreditation body. In the UK this is UKAS.

If you get certified by an accredited certification body, your certificate is likely to mean more than if you use a 'pay us and we'll email you a certificate' certification body. Remember – this is about bringing benefits to you and your workers, not the bit of paper on the wall.

National standards bodies

Almost every country in the world has a national standards body (NSB). These are where official national standards come from: NSBs work with industry, academia, government, workers representatives and many others to develop standards. Most NSBs are also a member of ISO, the international standards organization, and work with experts from all over the world to write global guidelines and requirements like ISO 45001.

In the UK the national standards body is BSI. This part of BSI is independent: it doesn't have shareholders and isn't part of government. Anyone can come to BSI for independent information on standards.

Auditors

Certification bodies use auditors. These are people trained to come out and assess your business. You can also use people in your own business to do your own checks.

FAQs

What is a standard?

A standard is a set of requirements or guidelines written by industry and subject experts. Everything in a standard is agreed by the experts as well as put out for public consultation. Standards reflect current good practice. A standard is not a law – you can choose to use it or not.

Is using ISO 45001 going to cost me lots of money?

Getting certified does mean costs, but putting in an ISO 45001 based system is mainly going to take time and thought. You can buy the standard from the BSI shop or read it for free at a library. Either way, the benefits should outweigh the cost in the long run.

How is it going to help me when there are only five of us in the company?

It doesn't matter if you have one person, five or half a million: a system is likely to make your business safer, healthier and more productive. The simpler your business the easier it is to put in a system that works, so only having five people when you start might be an advantage.

Do I have to get certified?

No. Putting a health and safety management system in place will bring benefits whether or not you have certification. You don't even have to meet all of the requirements to start seeing a benefit. The standard is just a framework: use it in the way that suits you.

Why would I get a certificate?

Certification gives you a recognized way of showing you are taking steps to protect the health and safety of your workers. It can give confidence to employees, customers, suppliers and contractors and helps drive OH&S improvement.

Further reading

Free information on managing health and safety, and on ISO 45001, is available from all sorts of places. There are also a lot of discussion groups on sites like LinkedIn, where users ask and answer questions and debate issues. One note of caution: anyone can write guidance and publish online and sometimes people get things wrong or are pushing a particular agenda. It pays to be careful of what is fact and what is opinion. It's best to start with more official views from HSE, BSI or ISO.

The standards themselves

The standards can be bought from the BSI shop or directly from ISO. If you want to read before committing hard cash ask your local library to get you read-only access.

ISO 45001:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems – requirements with guidance for use

This is the key standard. It gives requirements that can be used as a tool for setting up and checking own system and is also used for external audits if you go for certification.

BS 45002-0:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems. General guidelines for the application of ISO 45001.

Simple, clause by clause guidance on how to meet the requirements of ISO 45001.

BS 45002-1:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems – General guidelines for the application of ISO 45001. Guidance on managing occupational health.

A plain language introduction to managing the health side of the equation, containing practical examples and links to further reading.

BS 45002-2:2019 Occupational health and safety management systems. General guidelines for the application of ISO 45001. Guidance on managing risks and opportunities

A simple guide exploring how businesses of all sizes can manage risks and opportunities relating to OH&S and an OH&S management system.

BS 45002-3 Occupational health and safety management system – General guidelines for the application of ISO 45001. Guidance on incident investigation.

Simple, step-by-step guidance on investigating workplace health and safety incidents, focusing on understand why things happen and putting in measures to avoid it happening again.

HSG 65

This is HSE's guide to implementing a health and safety management system, and is free to download and use.

NOTES

THANKS

This guide to health and safety management was developed by UK experts from HSE, BSI and Lloyd's Register.

shop.bsigroup.com/45001

