Health and Safety Essentials

Lecture 5 – Audits Inspections & Monitoring in OHS

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Undergraduate Diploma in
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Recap last week's topic

Kahoot Quiz:

https://play.kahoot.it/v2/?quizId=b0334650-7926-4f73-83ea-fc79c5101060&hostId=335c469d-d273-41ca-a0de-2c184d6efd91

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, and 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.

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 safety.

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

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What is the main purpose of an OHS audit?

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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.

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

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Which aspect is NOT typically the focus of a routine OHS inspection?

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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.

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Reactive monitoring in OHS is focused on:

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Case Study: Integrated Approach to OHS – Auditing, Inspections, and Monitoring

Scenario:
ABC Manufacturing Ltd. is a medium-sized factory that produces automotive parts. The factory has multiple departments, including assembly, machining, and quality control. Recently, the factory has experienced an increase in minor incidents, such as slips and falls, equipment-related injuries, and ergonomic complaints from assembly line workers. During a recent safety audit, it was noted that some safety procedures were outdated, training sessions were inconsistently recorded, and certain hazards had not been fully addressed. Additionally, routine inspections had not identified some of these issues.

The company's Safety Manager, Maria, is now tasked with developing a strategy that integrates **auditing, inspections, and monitoring** to address these safety concerns and improve the factory's overall safety culture. Maria needs to create a systematic approach that will detect hazards early, ensure compliance, and continuously improve safety standards.

Case Study: Integrated Approach to OHS – Auditing, Inspections, and Monitoring

Instructions for Student Groups:

1. **Review the Scenario**: In groups, review the scenario at ABC Manufacturing Ltd. and identify the potential gaps in safety practices.
2. **Develop an Action Plan**: Propose a comprehensive action plan that integrates auditing, inspections, and monitoring to help ABC Manufacturing address its safety challenges.
3. **Focus Areas**:
    1. How auditing, inspections, and monitoring will work together to identify and mitigate risks.
    2. Specific steps for each process, including frequency, scope, and responsibility.
    3. The role of each process in supporting proactive and reactive safety improvements.

- **Discussion Points**:
  After developing your action plans, each group should present their recommendations.

Case Study: Integrated Approach to OHS – Auditing, Inspections, and Monitoring

For this case study, I recommend the following time allocation:

1.Reading and Understanding the Scenario (5 minutes):

1. Read through the scenario and instructions thoroughly, ensuring you understand the company's context and safety challenges.

2.Group Discussion and Action Plan Development Breakout Rooms (20 minutes):

1. Discuss, plan, and outline a strategy that incorporates auditing, inspections, and monitoring.
2. During this period, you can define specific activities for each process, decide on roles, and discuss how each component will contribute to an integrated safety approach.

3.Presentation and Group Feedback (15-20 minutes):

1. Each group should present their action plan briefly (3-4 minutes per group), focusing on key points of the strategy and how you integrated the three processes.
2. Allow time for feedback and questions after each presentation or a general discussion after all groups present.

Expected Key Points in Responses

1. **Auditing**:
    1. **Objective**: Assess the effectiveness of ABC Manufacturing's Safety Management System (SMS), policies, and training programs.
    2. **Scope and Frequency**: Conduct a system-wide audit annually to evaluate compliance with OHS regulations, assess the effectiveness of safety policies, and identify systemic issues, such as training inconsistencies and outdated procedures.
    3. **Audit Activities**:
        1. Review safety policies, procedures and training matrix for accuracy and relevance.
        2. Assess training content and records to ensure consistency and completeness.
        3. Conduct structured interviews with employees and supervisors to gather insights on safety culture and potential systemic issues.
    4. **Outcome**: A comprehensive report highlighting long-term improvements needed in the SMS, training consistency, and policy updates.

Expected Key Points in Responses

2. **Inspections**:
    1. **Objective**: Detect immediate and task-specific hazards, such as slips, equipment malfunctions, and ergonomic risks on the assembly line.
    2. **Scope and Frequency**: Conduct daily or weekly inspections in high-risk areas (e.g., assembly and machining) to identify and address specific hazards.
    3. **Inspection Activities**:
        1. Use a checklist for each department, targeting machinery safety, housekeeping, PPE use, and ergonomic conditions.
        2. Document hazards in real-time, including their locations, descriptions, and recommended corrective actions.
        3. Engage employees during inspections to gather feedback on any immediate concerns.
    4. **Outcome**: Immediate corrective actions to address identified hazards, ensuring that high-risk areas remain safe for workers.

Expected Key Points in Responses

3. **Monitoring**:
    1. **Objective**: Track safety data and trends continuously to identify emerging risks and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented controls.
    2. **Types of Monitoring**:
        1. **Proactive Monitoring**: Conduct regular safety tours, behavioral observations, and sampling to prevent incidents and reinforce safe practices.
        2. **Reactive Monitoring**: Collect and analyze incident and near-miss data, as well as ergonomic complaints, to identify recurring issues and areas for improvement.
    3. **Monitoring Activities**:
        1. Use proactive monitoring to identify early signs of hazards and address issues before they escalate.
        2. Review reactive monitoring data quarterly, focusing on patterns in incidents (e.g., slips and falls) and ergonomic complaints.
        3. Set up key performance indicators (KPIs), such as incident frequency rates and training completion rates, to track improvements over time.
    4. **Outcome**: Data-driven insights that inform both immediate adjustments and long-term changes in safety practices.

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