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## Joint Industry Committee

### Introduction to Framework of Standards for Health and Safety Program Audits

Document: JIC-002-2.1

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Joint  
Industry  
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# Introduction to Framework of Standards for Health and Safety Program Audits

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## Preface

The Joint Industry Committee (JIC) is comprised of the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board, Saskatchewan Labour Occupational Health and Safety Division and voluntary safety leaders representing a variety of industry rate codes. Through this committee, various industries voluntarily promote effective health and safety programs, and certification standards with the expectation of increased industry and employer participation in these fields. Such increased voluntary participation will lead to significant and sustained injury reduction for Saskatchewan employers and employees.

Through previous documents, noted below, the JIC has outlined the framework of standards for health and safety programs. An effective safety management program is a critical first step towards sustained injury reduction. In the same way that organizations perform quality checks on products and services they provide, they will also need to perform quality checks on health and safety programs. Effective implementation of the safety program, therefore, is equally important to its development. It requires continual quality evaluation to confirm that the program is working as intended and that improvements are being made. Therefore, quality audits are paramount to the success of any safety program.

As previously discussed, an effective safety program will focus on the critical two-step system of hazard identification and hazard control. In the same way, effective programs will include a comprehensive evaluation of program implementation to identify areas of strength and areas of improvement. An effective safety program audit is a means to achieve continual improvement in injury reduction.

This introductory document broadly describes the primary components of effective health and safety program audits as identified and agreed to by the JIC.

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### NOTE:

- Saskatchewan occupational health and safety legislation was a valuable resource in the creation of the framework of standards.
- Supporting background information about safety programs can be referenced in document JIC-002-1.1, JIC-002-1.2 and JIC-002-1.3.
- Supporting background information about safety program audits can be referenced in document JIC-002-2.0 (*Safety Program Audit Profile-Dacum*).
- Detailed explanations with supporting information can be referenced in document JIC-002-2.2 and JIC-002-2.3.
- Employers and employees should be aware of pertinent health and safety legislation. For example, a provincially regulated Saskatchewan employer should refer to the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993, Section 13* and the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 1996, Section 22*.

## Safety Program Audits: Introduction

The underlying purpose for any safety program audit is to identify areas of the program that are functioning well and to identify areas of the program that, if improved, will lead to fewer losses. These losses could include, but are not limited to:

- Injury and illnesses to people
- Related losses of injury and illness to workers, co-workers, families and society
- Production losses/downtime
- Product damage
- Equipment damage
- Plant damage

To identify whether the health and safety program has been effectively implemented, the organization will need to undertake a comprehensive evaluation. This evaluation is commonly referred to as the health and safety program audit. There are several key considerations when industry develops the measurement tools to accurately assess whether the health and safety program has been implemented and is operating as desired.

The following are the primary components of effective health and safety program audits as identified by the JIC:

1. Auditor
2. Audit Tool
3. Audit Process
4. Audit Type
5. Audit Scoring

## Safety Program Audits: Components

The first component to effective audits is the **Auditor**, which refers to the person(s) conducting the audit. Measuring health and safety program implementation requires a skilled person to conduct the evaluation. Audits can be complex due to the scope, industry specific hazards, legislation, safety program standards and audit protocols. An effective **Auditor** will possess the necessary skills to evaluate the entire safety program against the given standards. By having a skilled **Auditor** complete the audit, an organization is more likely to achieve a valuable measurement that will identify both areas of strength and areas where improvements can be made to the program.

The second component is the **Audit Tool**; this refers to the document the auditor uses to assess the status of an organization's safety program. If a skilled **Auditor** has the right tool for the job, there is a greater probability the measurement will accurately reflect the status of the organization's safety program. The **Audit Tool** is an intricate part of quality audits. It provides the framework from which to identify and communicate the status of the safety program to those that can put in place the appropriate **Hazard Controls** once the audit is completed.

**Audit Process** is another key component of effective audits and refers to the manner in which the audit is conducted. With the right tool for the job, and a skilled **Auditor** using the tool, an organization is more likely to achieve an accurate snapshot of the implementation of the health and safety program. A clearly defined **Audit Process** offers strong communication prior to engaging in the various phases and aspects of the audit. A clear understanding of the purpose, extent and expectations of the audit will lead to understanding the audit results. The **Audit Process** leads to significant findings, which are readily understood and that are acted on to improve the health and safety program.

The **Audit Type** refers to the distinction between audit scopes, timelines, methods, auditors, and purpose and is another component of effective auditing. For example, an audit may need to be conducted as a result of a significant incident, for certification, for

specific program elements, or as a method of preventative maintenance for the entire health and safety program. The **Audit Type** will be dictated by the needs of the organization and is an important element for continual improvement to the health and safety program.

**Audit Scoring** refers to the quantified measurement of the health and safety program implementation and essentially assigns value. It is with this value that an organization can determine areas of priority for program improvements. When developing and using audits, the component of **Audit Scoring** becomes important, as the scoring can assist with a balanced approach to the evaluation. This aspect of **Auditing** will ensure that all audits are using similar measurement criteria. The element of **Audit Scoring** is a key consideration to effective auditing, leading to valuable improvements in workplace health and safety.

## Conclusion

The audit components presented are synonymous with effective auditing. A critical understanding of effective safety program audits is that all audit components need to be in place, of high quality and clearly communicated. For example, it would be difficult to improve the program if a skilled **Auditor** used a faulty **Audit Tool** or **Audit Process**. In addition, for any health and safety program to be effective, there are several pieces that integrate and are dependant on one another. Effective health and safety programs are dependent on the quality of design, implementation, verification and continual improvement. With any one area being weakened, there is a greater possibility of a negative chain of events occurring which could result in loss. An audit is a critical link to move towards continual improvement.

Identified by the JIC as the fundamental components of effective health and safety program audits, this information is preliminary to a more detailed explanation of individual audit components. Detailed description of the audit components will assist in creating the framework of standards for safety program audits. From the framework of standards for safety program audits, the standards for program certification specific to individual industry needs will be derived.

To recognize the quality of safety programs, several industries have developed certifications that entice organizations to design, implement, improve and verify their health and safety programs against an industry set of standards. Certifications of effective programs can serve as a launch pad to further reduction of loss and act as a positive reinforcement for industry. For companies, certification can also act as a public demonstration of conformance to a set of standards resulting from external audits of the health and safety program. Development of a framework of standards for health and safety program certification is the next area of focus for the JIC.

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