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Joint Industry Committee

Framework of Standards for Health and Safety Program Audits

Document: JIC-002-2.2

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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 industry and employer participation will lead to significant and sustained injury reduction for Saskatchewan employers and employees.

This document broadly describes the agreed-upon components and sub-components of effective health and safety program audits. While health and safety programs are legislated in most industries in Saskatchewan, the intent of the following information is to outline a best practice approach to auditing health and safety programs as agreed to by the members of the JIC.

The purpose of this document is to serve industries as they develop or refine certification programming specific to their industry needs. It provides the framework of standards for future development of certification programs.

NOTE:

- Supporting background information about safety programs can be referenced in documents JIC-002-1.1, JIC-002-1.2, 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*) and JIC-002-2.1.
- 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*.

Components of Effective Health and Safety Program Audits

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

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Auditor

Introduction:

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.

Sub-component content:

The following sub-component content expands on what is anticipated to be in place for the component of *Auditor*.

The component of *Auditor* includes developed processes to:

1. Verify no conflict of interest exists on the part of the *Auditor*(s) that would adversely influence the outcome and validity of the audit, including the potential for the *Auditor* to gain financially based on audit outcomes, or the ability of an *Auditor* to conduct an external audit for an organization for which the *Auditor* is employed;
2. Verify the *Auditor*(s) follows pertinent legislation and an industry established code of ethics, including issues such as honesty, confidentiality, fairness of judgment, and consistency of audit application;
3. Establish a baseline for *Auditor*(s) knowledge of the industry, including a basic understanding of industry operations;
4. Confirm *Auditor* competency, qualifications, and knowledge of the evaluation process;
5. Confirm *Auditor* knowledge of audit protocol and the JIC framework of standards for health and safety programs and audits, which may include the ability to interpret other systems (i.e. CSA, ISO, etc); and
6. Verify the skill set of the *Auditor* including:
 - a. communication and observation skills;
 - b. investigation and interviewing skills;
 - c. a measured understanding of safety management programs;
 - d. ability to understand pertinent legislation;
 - e. ability to analyze documents, records and other pertinent health and safety program data; and
 - f. ability to comprehend and summarize findings.

Introduction:

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.

Sub-component content:

The following sub-component content expands on what processes are anticipated to be in place for the component of *Audit Tool*.

The component of *Audit Tool* includes developed processes to:

1. Confirm the information gathered on the *Audit Tool* is, at a minimum, related to all element and sub-element content identified in document JIC-002-1.2;
2. Confirm defined indicators are used to validate findings, including points, *Auditor* comments and recommendations;
3. Confirm a combination of methods are available to gather information and evaluate each sub-element in the *Audit Tool*, including documentation and records review, observations of work, and cross-sectional interviews;
4. Confirm the existence of *Auditor* guidelines which assist in determining how to interpret and use the *Audit Tool* and validate the findings;
5. Confirm the existence of a point system to indicate audit results by element and in its entirety;
6. Confirm the existence of minimum points assigned to each element that is balanced with all other elements;
7. Summarize audit findings including a point summary and executive summary which reveals the key issues, recognized strengths and recommendations for action; and
8. Seek post-audit improvement to the health and safety program for identified areas, complete with an established timeframe for implementation of improvements.

Introduction:

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.

Sub-component content:

The following sub-component content expands on what is anticipated to be in place for the component of *Audit Process*.

The component of *Audit Process* includes processes to:

1. Determine the minimum sample protocol that will be used, including documents, records, observations and interviews;
2. Determine the minimum percentage of work locations to be included as part of the evaluation;
3. Determine the minimum percentage of peak available workforce required at the time of the audit;
4. Engage in pre-audit communication with affected workplace parties prior to site audit activity which determines audit scope, logistics and expectations;
5. Execute the audit within established guidelines for audit duration, interview duration and site timelines;
6. Establish the combination of verification techniques to be utilized through standardized questions and guidelines for each question;
7. Establish guidelines for the verification techniques including:
 - a. suggested documents and records to review and related processes;
 - b. observations of conditions and acts and related processes; and
 - c. interviews representative of the workplace population.
8. Summarize findings in a concise manner that accurately reflects the findings of the audit score, and include an executive summary with recognition of program strengths and recommendations for program improvement;
9. Bring the audit to a close, including presenting a final report, calling the audited organization to action and determining follow up to be completed post-audit; and
10. Approve the audit, including audit signature by current senior management and verification that the audit has been completed to the protocol developer's standards.

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Audit Type

Introduction:

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.

Sub-component Content:

The following sub-component content expands on what is anticipated to be in place for the component of *Audit Type*.

The component of *Audit Type* includes developed processes to:

1. Determine the internal audit requirements, including persons responsible for completing the audit, schedules and use;
2. Conduct internal audits as established;
3. Determine the external audit requirements, including a timeline between external audits and completed by an industry-protocol qualified external auditor;
4. Conduct external audits as established;
5. Conduct a limited scope audit when one or more elements do not meet the audit standard for either internal or external audits, complete with an established timeframe for re-evaluation; and
6. Determine the requirements for and conduct post-event audits after a serious incident to identify safety program improvements.

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Audit Scoring

Introduction:

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 then a key consideration to effective auditing, leading to valuable improvements in workplace health and safety.

Sub-component Content:

The following sub-component content expands on what is anticipated to be in place for the component of *Audit Scoring*.

The component of *Audit Scoring* includes processes to:

1. Determine the overall score required for successful audit completion;
2. Determine the minimum requirements for scoring by element complete with a balanced weighting between all program elements; and
3. Determine the minimum requirements for validation techniques complete with a balanced weighting for the validation techniques.

Conclusion

This information is the framework for detailed development of an effective safety program audit. From this framework of standards for safety program audits, the standards for certification specific to individual industry needs will be derived.

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 process. In addition, for any health and safety program to be effective, there are several pieces that are integrated and 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 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.

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 a 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.

The materials/information in this document have been compiled by the Joint Industry Committee (referred to as JIC) from internal and external resources. While the JIC has attempted to provide accurate information in this document, no representation is made or warranty given as to the completeness, accuracy or currentness of the materials/information. In particular, you should be aware that the materials/information may be incomplete, may contain errors or may have become out of date. You should independently verify information obtained from this document before relying upon it in any manner.

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