AS/NZS 4804:2001

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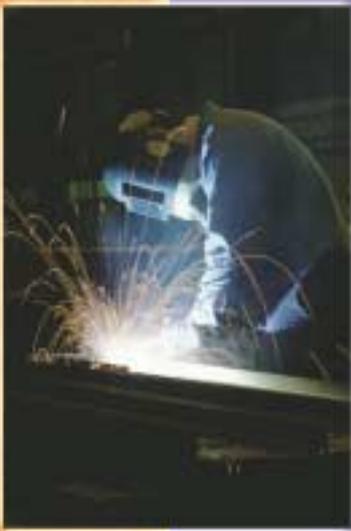
Occupational health and safety management systems—

General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques

Standards Australia

STANDARDS
NEW ZEALAND
Paerewa Aotearoa

AS/NZS 4804:2001

This Joint Australian/New Zealand Standard was prepared by Joint Technical Committee SF-001, Occupation Health and Safety Management. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 14 August 2001 and on behalf of the Council of Standards New Zealand on 31 August 2001. It was published on 15 November 2001.

The following interests are represented on Committee SF-001:

Accident Compensation Corporation, New Zealand
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Detailed information about joint Australian/New Zealand Standards can be found by visiting the Standards Australia web site at www.standards.com.au or Standards New Zealand web site at www.standards.co.nz and looking up the relevant Standard in the on-line catalogue.

Alternatively, both organizations publish an annual printed Catalogue with full details of all current Standards. For more frequent listings or notification of revisions, amendments and withdrawals, Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand offer a number of update options. For information about these services, users should contact their respective national Standards organization.

We also welcome suggestions for improvement in our Standards, and especially encourage readers to notify us immediately of any apparent inaccuracies or ambiguities. Please address your comments to the Chief Executive of either Standards Australia International or Standards New Zealand at the address shown on the back cover.

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Australian/New Zealand Standard™

Occupational health and safety management systems—General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques

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Preface

This Standard was prepared by the Joint Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand Committee SF-001, Occupational Health and Safety Management to supersede AS/NZS 4804:1997.

The objective of this Standard is to provide guidance on—

(a) how such an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS) may be set up;

(b) how it can be continually improved; and

(c) what resources may be used to do this.

Readers wanting certification for an organization's OHSMS or an internal review of their system are referred to AS/NZS 4801, *Occupational health and safety management systems— Specification with guidance for use*.

The objective of this revision is to align this Standard closely with AS/NZS 4801:2001 by removing differences in definitions and the use of technical terms that could confuse readers.

Most notably the terms '*hazard/risk assessment*' and '*control of hazards/risks*' are used to accommodate the different terminology used in Australia and New Zealand to describe similar elements of the systematic management of occupational health and safety.

Hazard/risk assessment refers to the process of *hazard assessment* in New Zealand, and *risk assessment* in Australia.

Similarly, *control of hazards/risks* refers to the processes of *control of hazards* in New Zealand, and *control of risks* in Australia.

It is the intention of Committee SF-001, that the next revision of this Standard fully revise its content. It is also intended that the next revision will take place at the same time as the revision of AS/NZS 4801.

The term 'informative' has been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. An 'informative' appendix is only for information and guidance.

Use of this Standard may not necessarily meet your OHS legal obligations.

CONTENTS

Foreword

The adoption and implementation of a range of effective occupational health and safety (OHS) management actions in a systematic manner can contribute to optimal outcomes for all interested parties. Organizations of all kinds and sizes adopt a systematic approach to managing OHS and develop OHS management systems (OHSMS) within the context of:

- The general growth of concern from all interested parties about OHS matters.

- Changes to legislation.

- Other measures to foster sustained OHS improvement.

There are many reasons why organizations implement an OHSMS including legal imperatives, ethical concerns, industrial relations considerations and to improve financial performance. Implementation of an effective OHSMS should, however, primarily lead to a reduction of workplace illness and injury, minimizing the costs associated with workplace accidents. OHSMS are also used by some organizations to demonstrate, internally and in some cases externally (via self-declaration or certification/registration as appropriate), that they are systematically controlling the risks to all persons affected by the organization's activities, products or services.

For organizations wishing to implement, develop, improve, or in some cases audit an OHSMS, a pair of linked and complementary Standards is available to provide guidance. This Standard is the primary Standard relevant to all organizations and provides general guidance on how to implement, develop and/or improve an OHSMS. AS/NZS 4801, *Occupational health and safety management systems—Specification with guidance for use* establishes an audit framework principally for use by third party bodies that have been asked by an organization to conduct an independent audit of the organization's OHSMS. The framework can also be used as a reference point for internal auditing procedures. It is envisaged that not all users of this primary Standard, AS/NZS 4804, will need to use AS/NZS 4801 as illustrated below.

This Standard provides general guidance on:

- How to set up an OHSMS.

- How to continually improve an OHSMS.

- The resources required to set up and continually improve an OHSMS.

The guidelines in this Standard describe a systematic management approach that can assist in both meeting legal requirements and lead to sustained improvement in OHS performance. These guidelines can assist organizations establish their own OHSMS and they also apply to any existing OHSMS. The guidelines do not prescribe the type or format or style of OHSMS that should be used. Rather, this Standard contains guidance for organizations of any size or type seeking to develop and implement an OHSMS, or improve an existing system, so that it will—

- be appropriate for that organization;

- be integrated with other systems and core functions of the organization;

- improve the organization's overall performance; and

- assist the organization to meet its legal responsibilities.

Injury management is an important element of any system but has been referred to only peripherally in AS/NZS 4804. The reader is referred elsewhere, to their respective jurisdictional authorities for guidance e.g. in Australia, to National Occupational Health and Safety Commission's *Guidance note for the best practice rehabilitation management of occupational injuries and disease*, NOHSC:3021 (1995); similarly, in New Zealand, *Active and Working! Managing Acute Low Back Pain in the Workplace*: *A guide for employers* published by the National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, and the Accident Compensation Corporation, April 2000.

AS/NZS 4801 is a specification Standard that establishes a framework primarily for enabling independent external audits and reviews of an organization's OHSMS, but it can also be used as a framework for internal audits. Many organizations already undertake internal audits or reviews to assess the effectiveness of their OHSMS. Some organizations may also seek independent third party assurances that an organization they are proposing to do business with has effective systems in place to control their OHS. To be effective, and to contribute to ongoing improvements in OHS performance, independent audits need to be conducted by competent persons within a structured management system and integrated with overall management activity. AS/NZS 4801 specifies the framework against which external auditors will assess an OHSMS. However, these audits and reviews would not be sufficient to provide an organization with the assurance that its performance not only meets, but will continue to meet, its ethical, legal and policy requirements.

These linked Standards have been written to be applicable to all types and sizes of organizations and to be generic enough to accommodate diverse geographical, cultural and social conditions, as well as the multiplicity of OHS legal jurisdictions. Thus two organizations carrying out similar activities but having different OHSMS and performances may both conform to the requirements established in AS/NZS 4801. However, any effective OHSMS needs to reflect OHS issues in the organization in which it is used. The basis of the approach is shown in Figure 1.
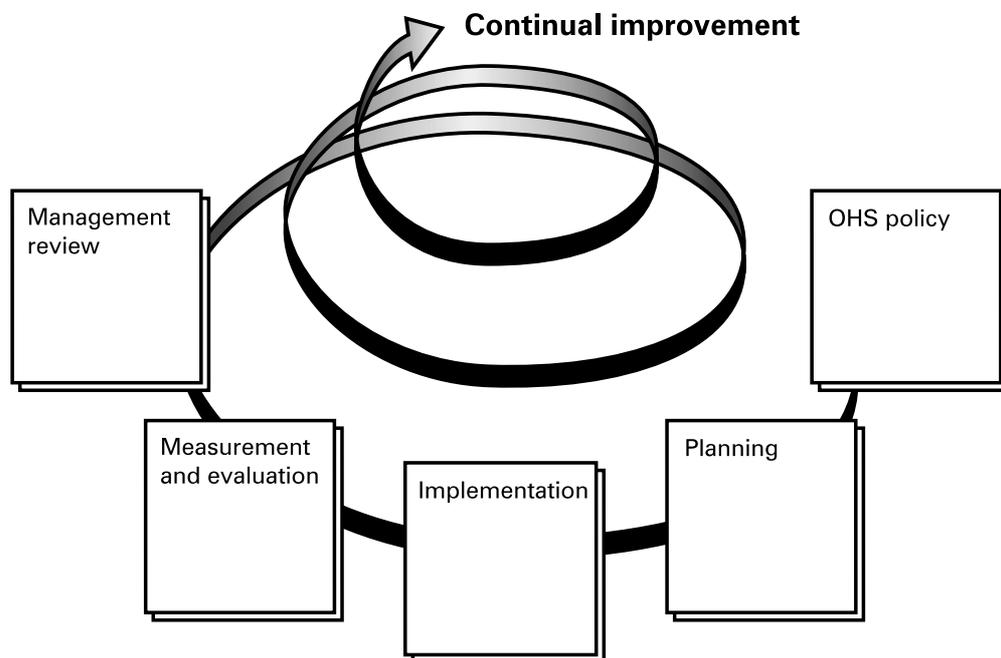

Figure 1   OHS Management System Model

The success of an OHSMS depends on commitment from all levels and functions within an organization, especially from senior management. An effective OHSMS can assist an organization to—

- set out OHS policy and objectives;

- establish, assess and review the effectiveness of procedures which give effect to OHS policy and objectives;

- achieve conformance with OHS policy and objectives of the organization; and

- demonstrate such conformance to others (via self-declaration or certification/ registration as appropriate).

The overall aim of these linked Standards is to support the achievement of the highest levels of OHS performance through systematic elimination or reduction of risks. Both AS/NZS 4801 and this Standard are intended to provide organizations with the elements of an effective OHSMS which can be integrated with other management requirements, to assist organizations to achieve OHS as well as other social and economic goals. These Standards are not intended to be used to create trade barriers nor change an organization's legal obligations. They are voluntary, useful tools for businesses and governments to use as little or as much as they choose.

Legislation in Australia adopts a risk management approach. Legislation in New Zealand adopts a hazard management approach. This legislation may also emphasize a preferred order of control method (often called a hierarchy of controls) which should be implemented in the workplace. The various jurisdictions define this hierarchy in different ways. Readers should note this and will need to ensure that the Standards are used to suit compliance requirements in their jurisdictions.

The emphasis in much legislation and in these Standards is for organizations to develop and implement control actions which, wherever possible, eliminate hazards or isolate people from the hazard. Where this is not possible, work activities should be planned and controlled through administrative means to the extent necessary to prevent injury and illness. In order to achieve these objectives an organization should encourage the implementation of the best practicable methods and technology consistent with the legal obligations to ensure that workplaces are safe and healthy.

These Standards share common management systems principles with environmental management systems Standards such as AS/NZS ISO 14001:1996, *Environmental management systems—Specification with guidance for use* and quality systems Standards like AS/NZS ISO 9001:2000, *Quality systems management—Requirements*, and encourage the integration of such management system standards. However, AS/NZS 4801 and this Standard are more aligned to risk management philosophies and methods as set out in AS/NZS 4360:1999, *Risk management* than are quality management systems standards.

The requirements set out in AS/NZS 4801 and this Standard do not need to be implemented independently of existing OHSMS elements, whether integrated or not. In some cases, existing OHSMS elements will meet the requirements. An organization may elect to continue to use any management system framework, structure or audit tool as required. There may be no need to change an existing OHSMS program or audit framework. This Standard and AS/NZS 4801 can be applied to any OHSMS.

STANDARDS AUSTRALIA/STANDARDS NEW ZEALAND

Australian/New Zealand Standard

Occupational health and safety management systems—General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques

1 Scope

This Standard provides guidance on the development and implementation of occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS) and principles, and their integration with other management systems.

The Guidelines are applicable to any organization, regardless of size, type, or level of maturity, that is interested in developing, implementing or improving an OHSMS.

The Guidelines are intended for use as a voluntary, internal management tool and are not intended for use by OHSMS certification/registration bodies as a specification standard.

Effective implementation of an OHS management system should seek to ensure the organization complies with relevant OHS legislation, standards and codes of practice. However, the implementation of any of the part of this Standard, does not in any way assure compliance with legal requirements, or other obligations placed upon the organization by a statutory body. Hence, the implementation, either actual or intended, of this Standard, or parts thereof, would not preclude any action by a statutory body.