

Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001)

SafeWork, ILO Geneva

1. Background

As a result of the ever-increasing pace of worldwide liberalization of trade and economies, as well technological progress, the number of occupational accidents and diseases are increasing in many developing countries. It is estimated that every year over 1.2 million workers are killed due to work-related accidents and diseases and 250 million occupational accidents and 160 million work-related diseases are occurring. The economic loss related these accidents and diseases are estimated to amount 4% of world gross national product.

After the successful introduction of the “systems” approach to management by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) through its series on Quality Management (ISO 9000 series) and Environmental Management (14000 series) during early 1990s, there was a view that the same approach could be used for managing occupational safety and health at the *organization* level. The possible initiation of work to develop an ISO standard on OSH Management Systems was discussed at an ISO International Workshop on OSH-MS Standardization in 1996. The workshop formed the view that the ISO should discontinue its respective efforts and that the International Labour Organization (ILO), because of its tripartite structure, would be a more appropriate body than ISO to elaborate international guidance documents for the establishment and implementation of effective occupational safety and health management systems.

In the light of the Workshop conclusion, the Occupational Safety and Health Branch (now: SafeWork) of the ILO, in co-operation with the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA), started in 1998 with the identification of key OSH-MS elements in existing standards. The first step was to review existing OSH management system standards and guidance documents. Based on this review, common elements of OSH management systems were identified and the draft Guidelines were prepared. Over a period of nearly two years, the draft was systematically reviewed by international experts, and improved continuously.

At the end of 1999, the *British Standards Institution (BSI)*, an ISO member body, launched an official proposal for the establishment of a new field of technical activity *Occupational health and safety management*, with a view to developing an ISO standard. This competing initiative by the ISO to on-going ILO work encountered strong international opposition and a campaign to stop the ISO work. This resulted in the failure of the BSI proposal in favor of the ILO.

The final draft ILO document was submitted for comments to ILO constituents January 2001. The ILO Guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems (ILO-OSH 2001) were adopted at a tripartite Meeting of experts in April 2001. The ILO Governing Body approved the publication of the Guidelines in June 2001. The Guidelines was published in December 2001.

2. ILO Guidelines on OSH Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001)

ILO-OSH 2001 provides a unique international model, compatible with other management system standards and guides. It is not legally binding and not intended to replace national laws, regulations and accepted standards. It reflects ILO values such as tripartism and relevant international standards including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161). Its application does not require certification, but it does not exclude certification as a means of recognition of good practice if this is the wish of the country implementing the Guidelines.

The ILO Guidelines encourage the integration of OSH-MS with other management system and state that OSH should be an integral part of business management. While integration is desirable, flexible arrangements are required depending on the size and type of operation. Ensuring good OSH performance is more important than formality of integration. As well as this, ILO-OSH 2001 emphasises that OSH should be a line management responsibility at the organization,

The guidelines provide guidance for implementation on two levels - national (Chapter 2) and *organizational* (Chapter 3).

A. National occupational safety and health management system framework

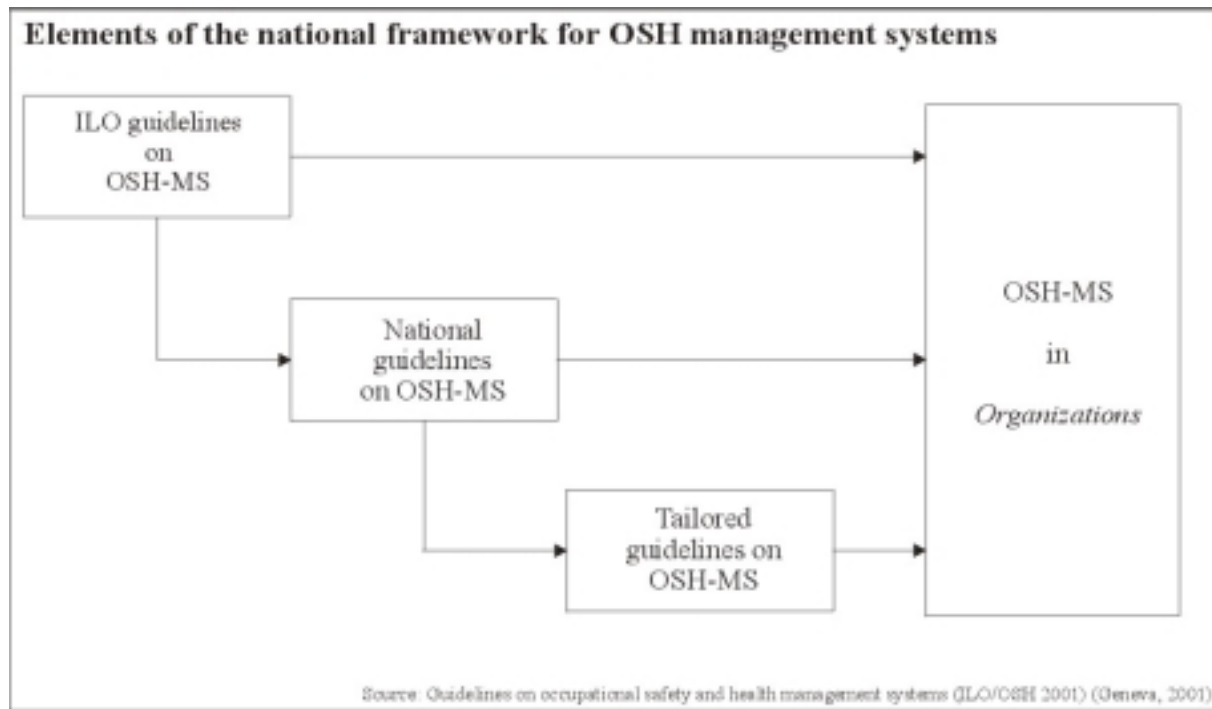
At the national level, they provide for the establishment of a national framework for occupational safety and health (OSH) management systems, preferably supported by national laws and regulations. Action at national level includes the nomination of (a) competent institution(s) for OSH-MS, the formulation of a coherent national policy and the establishment of a framework for an effective national application of ILO-OSH 2001, either by means of its direct implementation in *organizations* or its adaptation to national conditions and practice (by national guidelines) and specific needs of *organizations* in accordance with their size and nature of activities (by tailored guidelines).

The National Policy for OSH-MS should be formulated by competent institution(s) in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, and should consider:

- Promotion of OSH-MS as part of overall management
- Promote voluntary arrangements for systematic OSH improvement
- Avoid unnecessary bureaucracy, administration and costs
- Support by labour inspectorate, safety and health and other services

The functions and responsibilities of implementing institutions should be clearly defined as well. Figure 1 of the Guidelines describes the elements of the national framework for OSH managements systems. It shows the different ways in which ILO-OSH 2001 may be implemented in a member State:

Figure 1.



B. The occupational safety and health management system in the organization

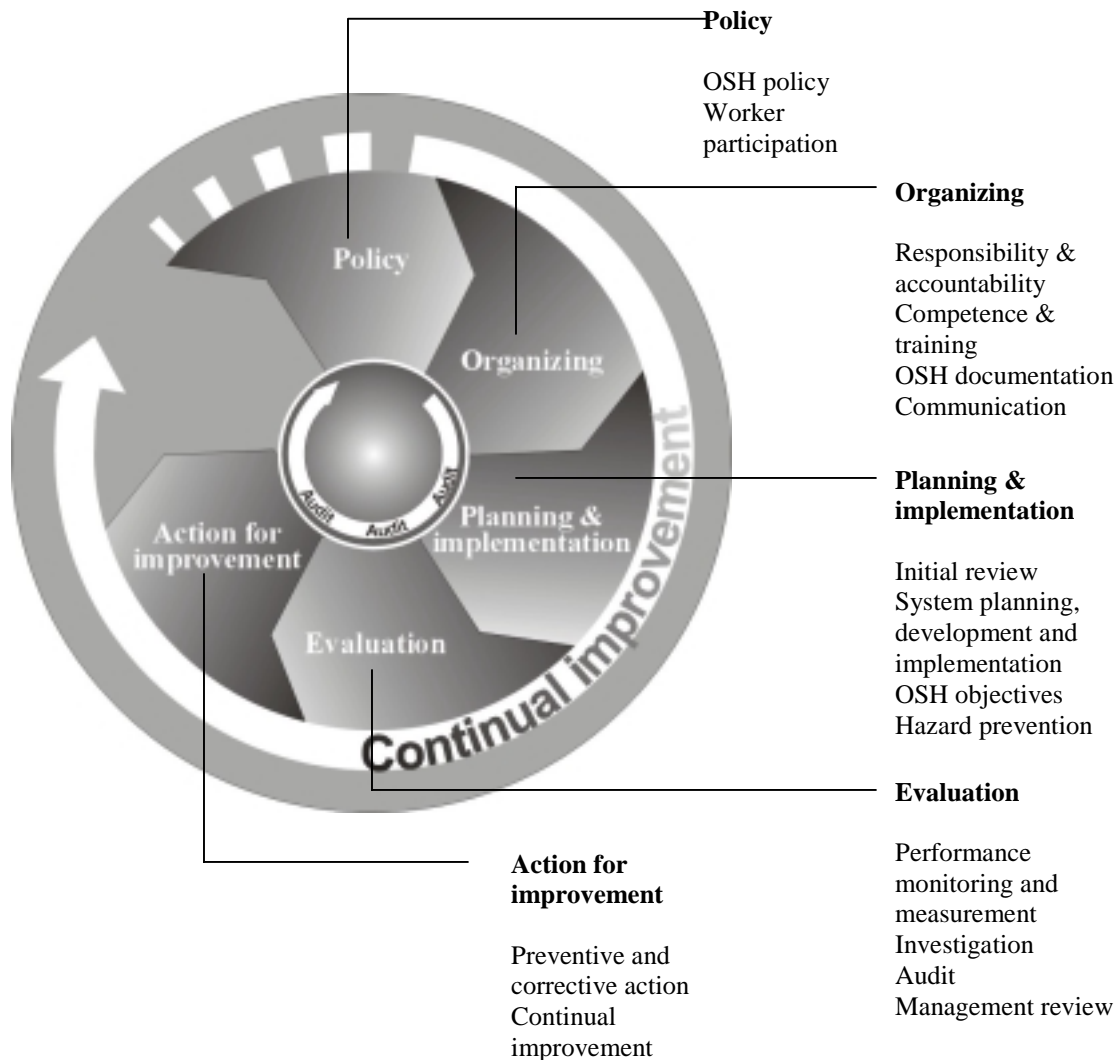
Chapter 3 of ILO-OSH 2001 deals with the occupational safety and health management system at the *organizational* level. The Guidelines stress that compliance to national laws and regulations are the responsibility of the employer. ILO-OSH 2001 encourages the integration of OSH management system elements into overall policy and management arrangements, as well as stressing the importance that at *organizational* level, OSH should be a line management responsibility, and should not be seen as a task for OSH departments and/or specialists.

The OSH management systems in the *organization* has five main sections which follow the internationally accepted Demming cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act, which is the basis to the “system” approach to management. These sections are namely Policy, Organizing, Planning and implementation, Evaluation and Action for improvement

Policy contains the elements of OSH policy and worker participation. It is the basis of the OSH management system as it sets the direction for the *organization* to follow. Organizing contains the elements of responsibility and accountability, competence and training, documentation and communication. It makes sure that the management structure is in place, as well as the necessary responsibilities allocated for delivering the OSH policy. Planning and implementation contains the elements of initial review, system planning, development and implementation, OSH objectives and hazard prevention. Through the initial review, it shows where the *organization* stands concerning OSH, and uses this as the baseline to implement the OSH policy. Evaluation contains the elements of performance monitoring and measurement, investigation of work-related injuries, ill-health, diseases and incidents, audit and management review. It shows how

the OSH management system functions and identifies any weaknesses that need improvement. It includes the very important element of auditing, which should be undertaken for each stage. Persons independent of the activity being audited should conduct audits. This does not necessarily mean third party auditors. Action for improvement includes the elements of preventive and corrective action and continual improvement. It implements the necessary preventive and corrective actions identified by the evaluation and audits carried out. It also emphasizes the need for continual improvement of OSH performance through the constant development of policies, systems and techniques to prevent and control work-related injuries, ill-health, diseases and incidents.

The main sections and their elements of the OSH management system at the *organization* are shown in figure 2 below:



For further information on ILO-OSH 2001, please contact:
 SafeWork, ILO, 4, route des Morillons CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland
 Tel: +41-22-799-6715 Fax : + 41-22-799-6878
 Email: safework@ilo.org Web: <http://www.ilo.org/safework>