



# AUDITING THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

## Why do an audit?

Audits are useful for a number of purposes including benchmarking progress in building a H&S management system, assessing the management system after a serious incident, or to meet a contractual agreement. For the Partners Program, the audit confirms that the employer has a health and safety or RTW management system which meets the standards set by the Program.

## How does WorkSafeBC confirm that we have a health and safety management system?

- The audit establishes that you have the system in place.
- It is completed either internally or by a third party external auditor, and submitted to the certifying partner for your industry.

## What does an audit consist of?

An audit is completed by a qualified person. It includes observations of workplaces and work in progress, interviews with workers, and an examination of documentation which confirms the existence of policy and practice in health and safety. The audit tool is the same for all employers of the same size (those with either more or fewer than 20 workers) in an industry sector.

## Is there more than one kind of audit?

- In order to qualify for the program, a certification audit is completed. In order to pass this audit, a total score of at least 80% must be attained, and scores on each audit element must be at least 50%. The certification audit is valid for three years.
- In the following two years, the same audit process is used for maintenance audits. The main purpose of the maintenance audit is to show deficiencies in the management systems; it is expected that the employer will use the results of the maintenance audit to generate an action plan.

## Who does the audit?

- For a small employer, with fewer than 20 workers, certification audits and maintenance audits may be completed by a trained employee.
- For a large employer, a third party external auditor will do the certification audit. The auditor must be approved by the certifying partner for the industry sector. Maintenance audits for large employers may be done by a trained employee.
- The certifying partner for the industry sector can provide a list of qualified external auditors.

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### What is an action plan for?

An action plan is intended to address deficiencies revealed by an audit, either certification or maintenance. By the use of an action plan to address each annual audit's deficiencies, the employer is enacting a continuous improvement process generally referred to as the Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle.

The action plan is further evidence that the employer is serious about making a positive change to the way it manages the business of health and safety.

### What does an audit cost?

The certifying partner for your industry sector may charge a nominal fee for registration in the program; WorkSafeBC does not charge employers for participation in the program.

For a small employer the cost includes the working time of the trained employee completing the audit. As part of the registration process there will be training costs for the employee who will perform the audit. For a large employer the external auditor's fee is determined by the market for auditors. Additionally there may be travel and accommodation expenses for the auditor(s), as well as cost of providing local transport in some cases.

### How can I reduce the cost of my audit?

For small employers (those with fewer than 20 workers), an internal audit is acceptable for certification and maintenance audits. Performance of the audit by an employee is probably the least expensive method available. For large employers, where an external auditor is required to complete the audit, costs may be significant. Avoiding the cost of re-auditing your business is the most significant measure to control cost.

While a trained employee cannot be used to perform the certification audit of a large employer, a trained employee can review the health and safety system in reference to the audit tool in advance of the audit, to determine possible gaps in the system, and appropriate changes/improvements can be made to ensure a good audit result.

### What if I don't pass my audit?

The auditor's responsibility is to produce a report—the audit—which accurately assesses the condition of the employer's health and safety or RTW management system. Not all employers will pass their audit, even with extensive preparation. Normally audits which are not a passing result are not submitted to the certifying partner, except in the case of an audit score over 70% which qualifies the employer for a Limited Scope audit, to be performed under closely controlled conditions within a defined timeframe.

If the employer does not pass an audit by an external auditor, the audit result can be used to produce an action plan for the employer to address the shortcomings of their system. The employer is free to have another audit performed, when the required changes have been made and have been in place for long enough to produce evidence for an auditor that the system is functioning properly.

Particular attention must be paid by the employer and the auditor in the case of a repeat audit, that the auditor is not placed in conflict of interest. There are specific restrictions on auditors with regard to offering their professional services to address the deficiencies in a system they have audited.