



City of Westminster

HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT POLICY

Westminster City Council – Health & Safety Audit Policy

Introduction

This Policy document forms part of Westminster City Councils Health and Safety Management System. The policy and its contents detail one aspect of the procedures currently in place governing the auditing of the health and safety management system within the Council. This Policy and its contents aim to supplement and complement the audit protocols applied by the Councils accredited auditors Bentley – Jenison Ltd.

The Policy and its contents have been developed to test the effectiveness of the Councils Health and Safety Management System via a process of periodic testing and evaluation against a set of defined criteria. The Policy and its contents will itself be the subject of periodic review and will be amended where deemed appropriate.

Audit - the business case

The need to test the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Councils health and safety management system forms an important part of the Councils business undertaking. The ultimate aim of the audit process is to ensure the provision of cost effective health and safety systems that minimise financial loss, business interruption and down time. The audit process will ensure systems remain current, effective and lead to continuous incremental improvement in the quality and diversity of the Councils health and safety management system. The reduction of employee absence through industrial related sickness and injury, the reduction of insurance premiums, the minimising of officer investigation time and appearances before statutory authorities and a direct reduction in insurance claims and payments to third parties make for sound business practice. Westminster City Council views the auditing of its health and safety management system as an integrated part of its overall business process.

Audit – the legal requirement

An audit can help demonstrate general compliance with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 -Sections 2-6, by confirming the Council has complied with its general duty of care to employees and other persons affected by its services and undertakings. Audit also shows compliance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 – Regulation 5 - to periodically review the safety management system.

External audit(s)

The Council has employed the services of the external accredited auditing firm of Bentley – Jenison Ltd to assist it with its audit objectives. This

Westminster City Council – Health & Safety Audit Policy

organisation will undertake independent audits of Council wide services and service activities in addition to the audits organised and undertaken in compliance with the objectives of this policy. The Council in pursuance of the objectives of this policy has also identified and employed the services of the British Standards Institution with the aim of achieving OHSAS 18001. It is the aim of the Council to achieve the OHSAS 18001 standard and to maintain standard of periodic auditing by the British Standard Institute in Accordance with the requirements of the OHSAS 18001. Where required Group/Unit can appoint other external auditors as required to address specific issues.

Departmental audit programmes

The Health and Safety manager/Advisor will ensure they identify a programme for the auditing of its health and safety management system or parts thereof on an annual basis. The audit plan it's rational and purpose will be brought to the attention of the respective Group health and safety committee at the start of each new financial year. The committee will give consideration to the audit plan and where appropriate make amendments where deemed appropriate. After consideration and such amendments as the committee sees fit the committee will consent to the audit programme and consider progress regarding this matter at each of its scheduled meetings throughout the remainder of the year.

The final draft of the audit plan will be brought to the attention of the Central Health and Safety Committee as soon as is reasonably practicable (allowing for committee scheduling). The Central Health and Safety Committee will be kept informed of progress regarding this matter and will monitor the effectiveness of the audit programme Council wide and will ensure that significant matters arising from the audits are given appropriate consideration.

It is a requirement of this audit plan that each Group/Unit undertake a minimum of **one** audit(s) per financial year. This requirement is mandatory and cannot be disregarded without the full consent of the Group health and safety committee and ratified by the Central Health and Safety Committee. The reasons for requesting a variance to the audit requirement must be justifiable and appropriate. Any request to this effect must be in writing and detail in clear unambiguous terms the reasons for the request.

Choosing what aspect to monitor can sometimes prove difficult and can mean that simple work procedures are over monitored, because it is straightforward, whereas more complex operations get overlooked as it is not easy to see how or what to monitor. Unit or Corporate Safety Advisers can provide the necessary guidance.

The results of the audits will form part of management review process, and will be considered at Group health and safety committees, central health and safety committees and strategic management board.

Westminster City Council – Health & Safety Audit Policy

Definition of an audit

An audit is a structured process of collecting independent information on the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the health and safety management system. An audit supports monitoring by providing managers with information on how effectively plans and the components of the health and safety management system are being implemented. It can also check the adequacy and effectiveness of the management arrangements and risk controls.

Audits should be done periodically and departments should agree a planned audit programme. The whole health and safety management system or a single element can be subject to audit. (see fig. 1 below)

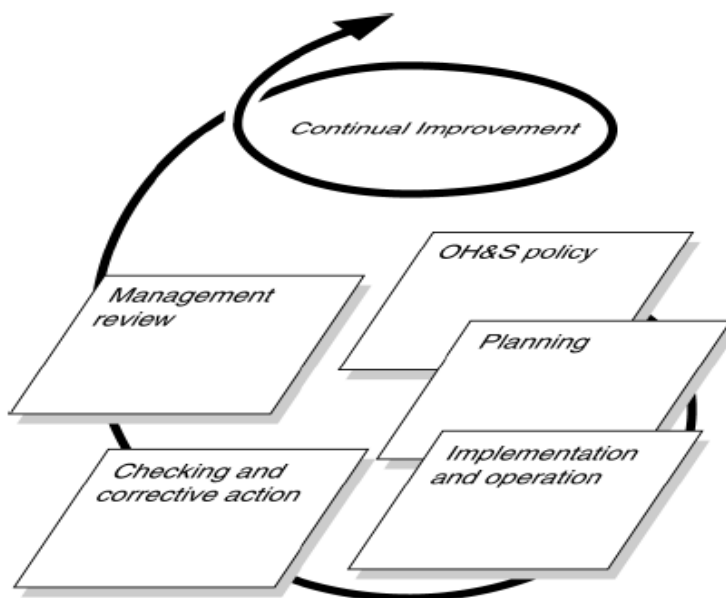


Figure 1 — Elements of successful OH&S management

Audit systems are designed to assess the following key elements of health and safety management:

- Policy – its intent, scope and adequacy
- The organisation including:
 - The acceptance of health and safety responsibilities by line managers and the adequacy of arrangements to secure control;

Westminster City Council – Health & Safety Audit Policy

- The adequacy of the arrangements to secure the involvement of all employees in the health and safety effort;
- The adequacy of arrangements to secure the communication of policy and relevant information;
- The adequacy of arrangements to secure the competence of all employees.
- Planning and policy implementation including;
 - Overall control and direction of the health and safety programme;
 - Standard setting – its adequacy and relevance;
 - The allocation of resources to implement standards;
 - The extent of compliance with standard and their effectiveness in risk control;
 - The long-term improvement in the accident and incident performance;
- Measuring systems – their adequacy and relevance;
- Reviewing systems and the ability of the organisation to learn from experience and improve performance.

Scope of an audit

All Service Units shall ensure an effective detailed audit plan is identified and prepared at the start of each financial year. The audit plan shall specify the service area and/or element of the Councils Health and Safety Management System that is to be audited, the reasons for the audit, the methodology to be used during the audit, the competencies of the auditor, the time frame for the completion of the audit, the audit report format, the committee or persons to which the audit will be presented for consideration and the reasons or rationale supporting any recommendations.

Competencies of the auditor

The auditor shall be one of Westminster City Councils accredited health and safety officers or a person with relevant training, experience and competencies. In the instance of external auditors the auditor shall be an employee of Bentley – Jenison Ltd and/or an accredited auditor for the purpose of OHSAS 18001. The auditor shall hold the relevant qualifications and/or have the relevant amount of industry or service specific experience. The auditor shall be able to provide evidence of any of the above requirements. Such requirements must be verified by the Group health and safety committee prior to commencement of any audit. An audit trail to this effect must be available and retained as part of any documentation relating to the audit.

Westminster City Council – Health & Safety Audit Policy

Responsibility for audits

Each Group health and safety committee is responsible for ensuring the planning, execution and completion of audits. The Group/Unit health and safety manager will act as lead officer to the committee for this purpose.

Bentley – Jenison Ltd is responsible for identifying and undertaking audits within Council services in accordance with the objectives of its audit programme and service commission with WCC.

OHSAS 18001 audits fall within the responsibility of the Corporate Health and Safety Manager. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager is responsible for ensuring the management, execution and completion of the OHSAS 18001 audit programme.

Auditing techniques

All parties involved in auditing WCC 's health and safety management system or parts thereof shall have a suitably developed audit system that conforms to the best practice requirements for auditing as specified by the Audit Commission or comparative industry standards and/or guidance. Such audit techniques as are applied shall conform to the above requirements and be recognised as examples of good industry practice and suitable for purpose.

Any modifications or changes to auditing techniques shall be brought to the attention of the Council through the appropriate forum (in this instance the department and central health and safety committees) for their consideration. Auditors applying such audit tools and/or techniques must be competent to do so and be able to demonstrate their competency in accordance with the “**competencies of auditor**” requirement contained within this policy.

Methodology

Westminster City Council's Corporate Health and Safety Manager has developed an internal health and safety assessment tool for use by the Councils Group/Unit health and safety manager's who are required to fulfil an audit role as specified by this policy. The council audit tool is located on wire, (http://wire1/documentstore/index.cfm?i_wire=/HR%20Framework//Health%20and%20Safety/Forms) of this policy document consists of 15 elements as specified below:

1. Organisations Health and Safety Policy
2. Planning for hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control
3. Legal and other requirements
4. Objectives
5. Health and Safety Management System
6. Structure and Responsibilities
7. Training and Competence

Corporate Health & Safety

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Westminster City Council – Health & Safety Audit Policy

8. Consultation and Communication
9. Documentation and Data Control
- 10 Operational Control of Contractors and other 3rd Parties
- 11 Emergency Preparedness and Response
- 12 Performance Measurement and Monitoring
- 13 Accidents, Assaults and Dangerous Occurrences
- 14 Audit
- 15 Senior Management Review

The audit tool contains information on the methodology and rational applicable to the use of this tool.

Further guidance

Further information concerning the contents of this policy can be obtained from your department health and safety manager or by contacting the Corporate Health and Safety Manager. Details of locations and contact numbers are listed in the Councils address book.