Employer Adoption of Voluntary Health and Safety Standards

SUMMARY

In 2018, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and funded contractor Eastern Research Group, Inc (ERG) to conduct a study focused on the use of consensus standards for occupational safety and health management systems (Employer Adoption of Voluntary Health and Safety Standards). This systematic review aims to provide a clear understanding of the various voluntary, consensus-based Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMS) standards, how they are developed and by whom, and the similarities and differences across them. It also describes what kinds of employers choose to adopt the standards and become certified to them, and how many have done so.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of a result of the Department's research priorities. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform Worker Protection, Labor Standards, and Workplace-Related Benefits programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **OHSMS Consensus standards are based on common core concepts.** While the different standards considered in the study (ANSI/AIHA Z10-2005, ANSI/AIHA Z10-2012, ISO 45001:2018 and ANSI/ASSP Z10-2018) are organized differently and use different language, they have core concepts in common, including:

  - Emphasis on management leadership
  - Robust worker involvement and participation
  - Risk assessment and identification
  - Hazard and risk control
  - The need for competence at all levels of the organization
  - Evaluation of the system to identify its achievements and deficiencies
  - Continual improvement

  The standards are consistent in their overall purpose of improving organizations' occupational health and safety performance. The standards differ significantly, however, in the level of detail in which these core concepts are implemented. Other differences exist also, for example, ISO 45001:2018 and ANSI/ASSP Z10-2019 emphasize integrating OHSMS with other organizational processes such as quality management, environmental management, and energy management.

- **OHSMS standards development represents a consensus process based on the experience, expertise, and perspective of a large group of well qualified professionals.** The ISO 45001:2018 and ANSI/ASSP Z10-2019 standards represent the consensus of large groups of well- qualified and experienced professionals that come together voluntarily to develop a standard. The resulting standards are based on the collective experience and expertise of the members of the committee. While the standards are often informed by available evidence and scientific data the final decisions on the content are made during a negotiation among the committee members. The members of ISO Technical Committee 283 (TC 283) that is responsible for ISO 45001 represents more than 90 members from across the globe including 78 member nations who vote on approving or disapproving the standard at its various stages of development. The ANSI/Z10 Committee includes 55 organizations representing industry, labor, academia, government, and professional organizations.

- **The development process for OHSMS consensus standards is highly structured.** Both ANSI and ISO have elaborate protocols and procedures that govern standards development and ensure consensus. These procedures are designed to ensure that standards represent the consensus of parties that are materially affected by them. The procedures ensure that a balance of interests is maintained, and that no interest group dominates decision-making. Both the ISO 45001:2018 and ANSI/ASSP Z10-2019 standards were developed using a rigorous review process in which each member of the committee provides general, technical, and editorial comments for consideration by the whole committee. Each comment must be addressed and dispositioned such that the committee addresses each comment and revises the document accordingly.

- **Continual improvement in occupational health and safety is a fundamental value.** The OHSMS standards are founded on the concept of continual improvement. Similarly, the standards development process is designed for continual improvement of the standards themselves. Over time, the standards are updated to reflect current evidence of their effectiveness and to integrate and recognize new concepts and techniques in occupational safety and health. In each update the revised standard is evaluated by a large number of health and safety professionals with a variety of experiences and perspectives. The evolution of the standards will reflect the increased understanding within the professional community of how organizations' performance on worker safety and health can be improved.

SEE FULL STUDY

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