

Guide to ISO 45001

What Does it Mean?

Overall the intent of International Standard ISO 45001:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems – Requirements with guidance for use (45001) is not substantially different from the requirements of AS/NZS 4801:2001, Occupational health and safety management systems - Specification with guidance for use (4801).

The new standard provides a framework for your organisation to manage its health and safety obligations to workers and others, however with more focus on achieving intended outcomes.

There are fewer requirements for mandated, documented procedures to be maintained in a formal manual. There is more emphasis on engagement and people's understanding of processes and systems. Whilst a 3-year period for migration is anticipated, this is yet to be confirmed by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and Standards Australia.

After the migration period, it is possible that 4801 and OHSAS 18001 (18001) will be withdrawn. As there are many current users of 4801 in Australia and New Zealand and it is the basis of quality certification, we've provided our take below on what is essentially the same and what are the key differences if you're thinking about changing over your framework.



What Stays the Same?

The standards both provide a framework from which an organisation can build its Health and Safety Management System and assess implementation of same. 45001 adopts the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle which is similar in philosophy to the continual improvement model applied in 4804/1.

The majority of the key elements from 4804/1 remain in 45001 (e.g. Policy, Planning, Risk, Objectives and Targets, Consultation, Emergency Preparedness) however some of these have been expanded, additional elements have been applied and the overall focus has changed to place a broader focus on the 'context' of an organisation and require greater involvement from leaders.



Top 5 Key Differences 45001 v 4801



1. Context of the Organisation

This standard places a strong focus on the organisation to identify the external & internal issues relevant to its operation, as well as consider the needs and expectations of “interested parties”, in defining the scope of its Health and Safety Management System.

This is a central difference from 4801 which had its only concession to organisational differences in the Policy criteria “be appropriate to the nature and scale of the organisation’s risks”.

The new standard isn’t prescriptive, because no one system will suit every organisation’s needs. Each organisation is to develop its own OH&S management system, specific to meeting its own needs in preventing workplace injury. There is however a requirement that organisations be able to justify the approach they have taken based on an understanding of risk.

2. Leadership & Commitment

A unique clause in 45001 which does not exist in 4801. There is a much stronger focus in 45001 on top management taking a more active role in the prevention of work-related injury and ill health and demonstrating leadership and commitment in all aspects of the Health and Safety Management System.

The new standard clearly defines the requirements for top management in promoting and leading safety culture as well as ensures that ultimate responsibility for health and safety management cannot be delegated to others.



4. Risk Management

45001 looks at improvement, risk evaluation and opportunity and includes the word “systematically” across these activities. The focus moves from spotting and handling workplace hazards to foresight, proactively looking for opportunities to improve safety and manage risk, including risks to the management system as well as hazards.



3. Participation & Consultation

There is a stronger emphasis on consultation and participation of workers at all applicable levels and functions in many aspects of the development, implementation and maintenance of the organisation’s safety management system. There is also a requirement for the organisation to determine and remove or minimise obstacles or barriers to participation.

The new standard introduces the broader term “worker” to encompass all persons who perform work or related activities under various arrangements which evolves from 4801’s use of the term “employee”. This standard also requires consideration be given to “interested parties” who may be impacted by the work, activity or decision.



5. Outsourcing, Procurement & Contractors

Stronger focus on managing risks associated with these activities and places emphasis on the need to put controls in place both for day-to-day operation as well as for emergency situations in or out of the country. The requirements are consolidated into stand-alone criteria where they have been spread across a number of areas in 4801.