



Issue 53

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Insight aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Occupational Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

This issue:

- Successful safety communication
- Risk-based thinking in the new ISO9001
- Checking that safety systems work

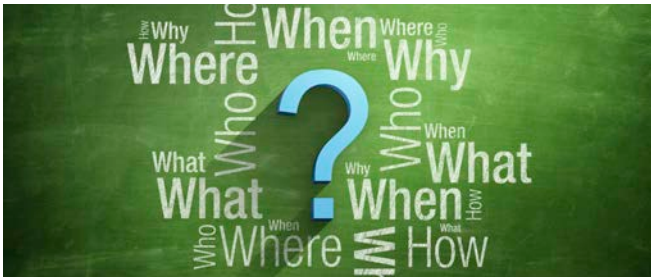
Successful safety communication

Safety professionals, and all PCBUs, should be aware that the job of communicating critical safety information is not done until there is certainty that the information has been understood.

Although *Insight* has touched on this topic before (see [Considerations for effective safety communication Insight issue 38](#)), it's a topic which requires ongoing attention.

Tailoring the method of communication to suit the nature of the hazards and risks involved, the type of information to be communicated, the audience, and the number of people involved is critical. These issues are explored in our earlier article.

The step frequently missed is then to check that the information has been understood by the workers.



Methods for determining the effectiveness of the communication process include:

- Confirming the workers' understanding of the requirements at the end of a 'face-to-face' communication process by asking verification questions (with more detail than just a yes or no answer), or asking them to paraphrase the requirements.
- Exploring the workers' understanding by asking them to identify the relevant Procedure, JSA or SWMS to be applied, or to correctly identify the equipment needed for the safe completion of a task.
- Monitoring (directly or informally) the workers' application of the information which they've just received.
- If the information is safety critical, it may be appropriate to include a brief assessment element to test the workers (in written form) on the information just imparted.

It may be beneficial to include a sign-off component to the record of communication, with an annotation detailing that by signing, the worker acknowledges an understanding of the requirements.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.



Risk-based thinking in the new ISO9001

Revisions to ISO9001:2008 *Quality Management Systems* are in the pipeline, with a draft currently expected to be published in April and the updated Standard anticipated in October 2015.

Chatter about the revision has included the term “risk-based thinking”, but many are uncertain about what this means to the practical use of the Standard.

Previous versions of the Standard have included risk management via a clause relating to preventative action. With the new revision of the Standard, risk management is not an isolated clause but instead is considered and integrated throughout the Standard.

The underlying intent of a Quality Management System is still to achieve conformity and customer satisfaction with an organisation’s products or services. What is different in the new standard is that a risk-based approach is taken to accomplish this outcome.

From available draft materials, examples of how this approach is embedded in the new Standard include the following requirements:

- The organisation must determine the risks which may affect its ability to achieve conformity and customer satisfaction
- Senior management are required to commit to this risk-based approach to quality management
- The organisation is obliged to take action to identify risks and opportunities
- It is also required to implement processes to address the identified risks and opportunities, and to monitor and evaluate the risks and opportunities
- There is also a requirement to continually improve by responding to changes in risk.



The underlying intent of requiring organisations to utilise “risk-based thinking” in their approach to quality management is to maximise the likelihood of achieving the objectives of a quality management system (i.e. to make output more consistent and to give confidence to customers that they will receive the expected product/service).

In reality, this new focus in the approach to quality management systems should not significantly change the systems and processes of well-run organisations – after all, it is already good business to utilise risk management principles in the operation of any organisation, and the majority of organisations do so, either formally or informally.

However, in order to demonstrate best practice, and especially to achieve certification after the new Standard is released, organisations will need to give consideration to the ways in which their quality management system and the processes used to implement it are documented and communicated.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

Checking that safety systems work

Good safety management practice includes undertaking regular workplace inspections to identify hazards and confirm that workplace risks are effectively managed.

Depending on the organisation and the level of operational risk, such inspections can (and should) vary greatly in frequency and thoroughness.

However, it is not uncommon for workplace inspections to be relied on as the primary tool by which an organisation determines whether its safety management system is effective.

While workplace inspections are important and should certainly be regularly undertaken, an audit of the safety management system and processes is critical to provide a more in-depth assessment of the effectiveness of safety management across the organisation. QRMC would recommend that an audit of this nature should be undertaken at least annually

An audit is more structured and systematic than an inspection, and will delve deeper into the way the organisation operates. Additionally, unlike an inspection which is a “snapshot in time”, an audit assesses the performance of the safety system over a period of time.

The audit involves:

- A review of documented safety systems and procedures to confirm that these reflect both regulatory requirements and the needs of the organisation.



- Interviews with personnel from various levels of the organisation, verifying their understanding of the organisation’s safety requirements (as pertaining to their role), the extent to which their daily activities comply with these requirements, and their ability to apply the management system and processes.
- Inspections of workplace sites to identify indicators of safety management system shortcomings.
- Formulation of recommendations for management review, so that identified problems can be addressed.

Audits should be scheduled regularly and their findings will become part of the management review process as required by AS4801 *Occupational health and safety management systems*. Regular internal audits are an important way for an organisation to check that their safety management system is actually effective in keeping workers safe. Also, from time to time, an organisation will benefit from having a safety audit conducted by an external auditor, in order to provide objective benchmarking.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

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