Occupational Health & Safety Practitioner

Reading

INSPECTIONS, CHECKLISTS & PROCEDURE AUDITS

January 2009

SafetyLine INSTITUTE®

Contents

OVERVIEW 1

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION 2

SECTION 2: CHECKLISTS 7

SECTION 3: PROCEDURES AUDITS 11

SECTION 4: RISK ASSESSMENT 12

GENERAL CHECKLIST 16

REMEDIAL ACTION STATEMENT REPORT 25

RISK ASSESSMENT RECORD 26

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OVERVIEW

This reading provides a basic understanding of workplace inspections, checklists and procedural audits. The information covers their advantages and disadvantages, and explains how to formulate one's own inspection procedure and procedural audit as part of the approach to accident prevention.

Objectives

After reading this information you should be able to:

- outline how to undertake workplace inspections and procedural audits;
- detail the advantages and disadvantages of checklists; and
- formulate their own workplace inspection procedures and checklist.

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Section 1: INTRODUCTION

Glossary of terms

When they are first used, glossary terms are indicated with an asterisk (*). Make sure that you are familiar with the **Glossary of terms** before going any further.

Workplace inspections	An inspection of a workplace aimed at identifying hazards. The inspection should be performed with a checklist and be periodically reviewed.
Procedures audits	An examination of the procedures available at a workplace (being either operating, maintenance or emergency procedures) and evaluating the effectiveness of the procedures in line with the occupational health and safety policy.

1.1 Inspections

Workplace inspections* have legal status, being an obvious part of the general duty of care. In some jurisdictions worker health and safety representatives must inspect the workplace for hazards.

Workplace inspections on their own will not guarantee that a workplace is free from hazards that may cause injury. They must be used in combination with other occupational health and safety management systems for good OHS performance.

1.2 Purpose of inspections

Inspections are necessary to:

- identify aspects of the working environment and work tasks that could contribute to injury/damage - and thus allow unacceptable conditions or conduct to be addressed;
- review workplace standards in accordance with legal and company requirements; and
- provide a systematic means, for those who are at risk of injury, to help control the working conditions.

Inspections are an essential element in hazard reduction because issues must be identified, assessed, fixed or reported. In this way hazards are reduced and thus the workplace is safer. Inspections are only part of the hazard control strategy. They are complemented by:

- plant and equipment audits;
- task analysis and introduction of safety procedures;
- control and monitoring of materials;
- employee training; and
- consultative procedures.

1.3 Snapshot approach

Workplace inspections are a "a snap shot" of the processes and procedures occurring at a workplace. In some cases spending 2 hours inspecting a work area where the workplace operates 8 hours a day, 40 hours per week, 52 weeks a year **can be ineffective** particularly if the work processes are variable. In most workplaces the work varies from day to day and, as a result, this has an influence on the effectiveness of workplace inspections. To overcome this hurdle workplace inspections should be regular and used in combination with other tools (where applicable) such as:

- systems audits, for example the WorkSafe Plan;
- job safety analysis;
- consultative discussions;
- tool box topics;
- reviewing accident statistics and trends;
- MORT - Management Oversight Risk Tree;
- Systems Safety;
- Hazard and Operability studies;
- Fault Tree Analysis; and the
- Dow Index.

1.4 Tunnel vision

The purpose of workplace inspections is to identify those hazards to which employees may be exposed, so that risks can be assessed and controlled where necessary.

Persons conducting inspections can develop "tunnel vision" if the person works in the same area he/she is inspecting. This phenomenon occurs due to the familiarisation of hazards in the workplace and results in the failure to clearly identify hazards.

Adequate training must be provided to overcome this problem. It may also be good practice for inspecting to be done by someone from outside the work area.

1.5 Responsibilities

Site Manager:

- Ensure that an effective, participative inspection process is developed for each work group/area.
- Participate in the inspections on a regular basis.
- Ensure action plans and the follow-up process are completed.

Middle Managers/Supervisors:

- Ensure that the inspection process is implemented within the respective work group.
- Participate in the development of inspection checklists for each area.
- Participate in inspections and ensure remedial action is prompt.
- Monitor recommended action to ensure resolution.

Employees:

- Participate in inspections and their development and implementation.
- Recommend practical solutions to identify risks.

1.6 Develop inspection procedure

As a minimum, it is recommended that all facilities be inspected at least once a month. Depending on the risks, the dynamics of the work and the results of inspections and other factors, this may need increasing. The inspection should not be by the same person each time but should be done with the worker health and safety representative. Periodically, say quarterly, the supervisor should conduct a separate assessment of the inspections.

To be an effective hazard reduction strategy, it is essential that inspections be planned and systematic. This does not remove responsibility from each employee to be vigilant in recognising and correcting issues which they believe may cause harm or damage.

At the completion of each inspection, any deficiencies identified must be noted on the summary sheet for action. A debriefing should then be conducted with the area supervisor, who needs to resolve how and who will be responsible for rectification and for notifying the health and safety committee. Any issues that are identified as continuing must be reported to the area manager and to the occupational health and safety committee.

It is the responsibility of each department to develop with their work teams the most efficient manner in which such inspections will be performed. The minimum requirement is that a written procedure for inspections is developed which:

- defines responsibility;
- stipulates the frequency of inspections (which should be on a regular basis);
- gives precedence to consultation with worker health and safety representatives;
- recommends appropriate corrective action within specified timeframes;
- sets priorities for corrective action;
- assigns personnel for corrective action;
- provides feedback to the health and safety committee;
- provides feedback to work groups; and
- has a follow-up or review of corrective action.

Section 2: CHECKLISTS

2.1 Develop inspection checklist

Formulating a workplace inspections procedure and checklist is a difficult task that requires a lot of research. Each workplace needs to define an "ultimate" checklist that covers all identified hazards and details the necessary procedures.

The blank **General Inspection Checklist** provided in the Appendices at the end of the reading satisfied the above criteria for a specific workplace but, because every workplace has unique and different hazards, for your own workplace you must also review relevant standards, codes of practice, legislation and general guidance material then construct your own one.

KEY POINT
It is essential you develop your own inspection procedure and checklist.

2.2 Problems and benefits of checklists

The checklist is a widely used instrument and is ideal as a starting point in workplace inspections. There are numerous checklists provided in occupational health and safety literature and predominantly there are two different standard rating systems for describing hazards:

- Yes/no or satisfactory/unsatisfactory; and
- Scale system (poor - fair - good - very good - excellent, or 0-10).

The two rating systems should only be used if there are clear and specific matters to be considered. These specific matters should relate to occupational health and safety requirements such as Australian Standards, codes of practice or regulations.

KEY POINT

Checklists should cover all potential hazards and therefore all workplaces should develop their own checklists in line with hazards present and areas where the accidents are occurring.

The problems with checklists are:

- Checklists can be too detailed or provide little detail.
- Limited to the knowledge of the user.
- Follow-up action may be hard to detail.
- Checklists may be too general, eg. a number of machines are to be addressed in one area but there is only one section in the checklist on plant/equipment.
- Questions may be poorly structured and provide little scope for variation on controls.
- Checklists vary according to the workplace due to different hazards being present, eg. checklist for fishing industry may be different to the manufacturing sector.

The benefits of a checklist include:

- Systematic way of checking compliance.
- Controls can be instigated immediately.
- Record provided for future/previous audits.
- Compliance with legislation can be easy to check.

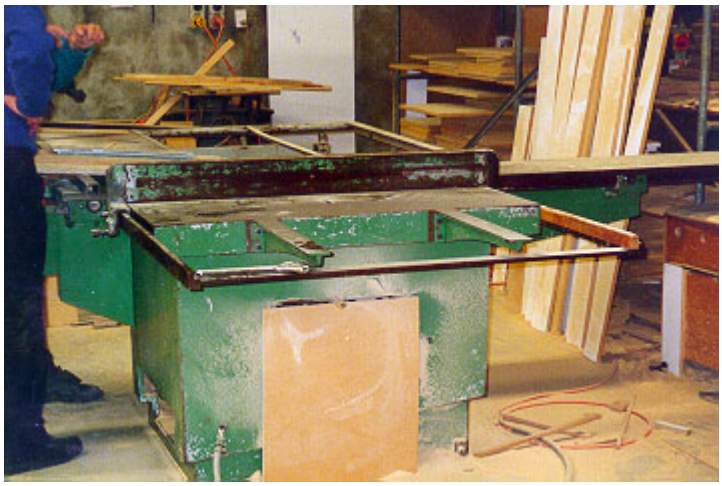
2.3 Use work area specific checklists

Checklists should be developed for each work area. If an incident (either injury, damage or near miss) is reported, a review of the checklist must be undertaken to ensure that all necessary aspects are being checked.

A general checklist has been included at the end of this reading. This should be adapted to the particular needs of each work area and workgroup. Prior to implementation, all checklists should be sighted and commented upon by the departmental manager and the occupational health and safety specialist.

Checklists must be designed to be as specific as possible and require responses that avoid judgements not reasonable for the person to make. Checklists should be for functional work areas and be capable of being completed within 15 minutes.

2.4 Example maintenance workshop inspection checklist



An inspection was made of a maintenance workshop using the following checklist specially developed for that work area.

Checklist

- Are the aisles clear of rubbish?
- Are the aisles clear of electrical leads?
- Is the machine adequately guarded?
- Adequate work space?
- Does the machine have an emergency stop?
- Can the machine's energy source be isolated and be locked out during repair, cleaning, and maintenance?
- Is the workplace adequately lit?
- Are workers adequately trained in the safe use of the machine? (requires additional investigations)
- Is the floor surface regularly cleaned?
- Is wood dust adequately controlled?
- Are electrical leads in good condition?
- Are electrical leads tagged and maintained?
- Is the floor surface slip resistant?
- Is the noise exposure likely to exceed the action level?
- Are saw blades used that reduce the amount of noise?
- Are employees wearing hearing protection?
- Are employees wearing respiratory protection?
- Are employees wearing eye protection?
- Are safety signs displayed?
- Is pedestrian access delineated from work areas by white lines?
- Is a push stick used for cutting small pieces of wood?
- Is the height of the table appropriate (1015 mm height) for the operator?
- Is the weight of the object being cut less than 16 kg?
- Is the object being cut more than 50 cm wide?
- Are there emergency procedures to follow in case of an accident or fire?
- Is there an appropriate first aid kit nearby?
- Have the extinguishers been recently serviced?
- Are there adequate directions towards fire exits?

Section 3: PROCEDURES AUDITS

Often, the use of checklists focuses one away from evaluating workplace procedures. This is why workplace safety procedures audits* are used to identify and evaluate existing operating, maintenance and emergency procedures:

- Are they in place?
- Are people aware of them?
- Are they being followed?
- Are they adequate?

The areas covered would include the following:

- Operating procedures - operator's understanding.
- Safety equipment - performance and operator's understanding.
- Permit systems - procedures and checks.
- Emergency plans - procedures, operator's understanding and practices.
- Training - extent, levels, comprehension testing and reinforcement.
- Contractors - training, procedures, checks and performance

KEY POINT

The "WHAT IF?" technique is a useful questioning technique for assessing maintenance and emergency procedures.

Section 4: RISK ASSESSMENT

A risk assessment should follow the inspection if hazards are identified. The risk assessment is an evaluation of the likelihood of undesired events occurring and of harm or damage being caused, together with value judgements concerning the significance of the results. A risk assessment examines whether the risk is high, medium or low, so that remedial action can be planned.

The assessment identifies and takes account of all the significant factors that can affect the chance and extent of harm, and indicates how management of such factors needs to be improved to eliminate or lessen the chance of that harm occurring. Factors evaluated include:

- whether risk control is in compliance with existing legislation;
- whether accepted industry standards are being followed;
- whether the hazard can be eliminated altogether; and
- how the hazard can be effectively controlled (if elimination is not possible).

KEY POINT

Workplace inspections and checklists provide a uniform and systematic way of identifying hazards at a particular workplace and can be used as a basis for the risk assessment and risk control processes.

4.1 Risk rating

In many cases it will be clear that some risks require attention before others. Where there is uncertainty a risk rating procedure can be used. A risk rating is the effect of hazard multiplied by the likelihood of harm:

Severity Rating (effect of hazard)		**Frequency Rating** (likelihood of harm)	
Major	3	High	3
Serious	2	Medium	2
Slight	1	Low	1

The risk rating for each hazard is calculated by simple multiplication. So, a hazard with a severity rating of 3 (high) and a probable frequency rating of 2 (medium) has a risk rating of 6. This hazard will have a higher priority for control than another hazard whose severity rating is 1 (slight) and whose probable frequency rating is 2 (medium), giving a risk rating of 2.

Descriptions used to define the numbers may vary, as may the range of numbers used. An additional weighting factor can be applied to take into account the possible number of people exposed.

4.2 Risk control rating

Following the initial risk rating process, each hazard should be examined with regard to:

- factors which **increase** the risk rating for all or some groups (for example: where employees are exposed to passive cigarette smoke as well as another hazardous substance; employees working with hazards in isolation or in confined spaces; employees working in a stressful occupation combined with a noisy workplace); and
- factors which **decrease** the risk ratings (such as control measures already in place).

This means the factors must be identified and described, and the individual ratings reassessed (using the rating scales) to calculate a final risk rating.

Using the relevant legislation and industry standards as a guideline, conclusions should be reached on whether existing control measures are adequate or what additions or improvements are needed. Where other measures are identified as necessary (as a result of the risk assessment) these findings should be used to amend safety policies and procedures for planning, implementing, controlling and monitoring safety measures.

4.3 Record of risk assessment

It is important for employers to record their assessments and to show clearly how assessments were made and conclusions reached. The record should contain at least:

- a description of the process/activity assessed;
- identification of the significant risks;
- identification of any group of workers at particular risk;
- date of assessment and where appropriate of the next review; and
- name of the person carrying out the assessment.

4.4 Example risk assessment record

Following the inspection of the maintenance workshop, a risk assessment was made of the hazard resulting from inadequate machine guarding.

A copy of the completed **Risk Assessment Record** form has been included as a resource for this reading. A blank copy has been included in the Appendices.

4.5 Example remedial action statement report

Date of Initiation: 13.3.2008

Identified Risk	Action To Be Taken	Action By Whom	Target Date	Date Completed	Signature
Loss of finger	- Stop use of machine	Employees and Employer	Immediate		
during use of					
panel saw	- Install guard	Employer	15.3.08	**18.3.08**	

APPENDICES

Blank copies of the following are provided for your use.

- General Inspection Checklist
- Remedial Action Statement Report
- Risk Assessment Record

Your feedback

WorkSafe is committed to continuous improvement. If you take the time to complete the online Feedback Form at the SafetyLine Institute website you will assist us to maintain and improve our high standards.

GENERAL CHECKLIST

DEPARTMENT SAFETY REPORT	
Department	
For the Month of	
Number of Personal Accident Reports	
Lost time injuries	
Hours lost	
Housekeeping Checklist done by	/ / /
on	/ / /
with	
Signed	
Date CC: OH&S Committee Member Department Manager Senior Department Manager	

Date:	**Time:**
Area:	**Supervisor**:

Check Points * Please tick appropriate rating	**Ratings**						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
FLOORS:							
Even surface - no holes?							
Clean?							

Slip resistant?							
Stock material out of way?							
Special attention to areas around machines?							
Floor openings covered or protected when not in use?							
DOORWAYS AND AISLES:							
Surface free from defects?							
Clear of cases, material & rubbish?							
Clear of trolleys, handtrucks, etc?							
Clear of electrical leads?							
Clean?							
MACHINES:							
Adequate work space?							
Clean?							
Adequately guarded?							
Noise level satisfactory?							
Drip pans to prevent oil on floor?							
WORK BENCHES:							
Clear of rubbish, tidy and uncluttered?							
Tools not in use kept in place?							

Check Points	**Ratings**						Comments
*Please tick appropriate rating	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
WINDOWS:							
Clean, admitting plenty of daylight?							
No broken panes?							
Ledges free of dust, tins or rubbish?							
STAIRS AND LANDINGS:							
Clean; free of oil and grease?							
Handrails in good repair?							
Landings clear of crates and other obstructions?							
LADDERS AND							

STEPS:							
Stored in the proper place?							
Rubber safety feet where possible?							
No broken or missing rungs or other defects?							
STORAGE:							
Adequate and convenient racks and bins?							
Clear of traffic areas?							
Materials stored in racks and bins wherever possible?							
Shelves stable with good foundations?							
Stack layers cross-tied where possible?							
Floors around stacks and racks clear of rubbish?							
Required materials taken from tops of stacks - not pulled from below?							

Check Points *Please tick appropriate rating	**Ratings**						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
ELECTRICAL:							
Gear not in use properly stowed?							
Portable electrical equipment protected by RCDs?							
No broken plugs, sockets or switches?							
Portable power tools in good condition?							
No frayed or defective leads?							
No uprooted leads over traffic or access way?							
Electrical cord tagged and maintained?							
Isolating transformer?							
Isolating switches in use?							
RUBBISH:							
Bins located at suitable points around plant?							

Bins emptied regularly?							
Oily rags and combustible refuse in covered metal containers?							
YARDS:							
Clean and free from rubbish?							
Even surface - no holes?							
No grease or oil patches?							

Check Points *Please tick appropriate rating	**Ratings**						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
HYGIENE:							
Mealrooms clean and tidy? Provision for regular cleaning?							
Adequate washing facilities with soap or substitute and towels; provision for regular cleaning?							
Adequate and private toilet facilities and toilet paper, provision for regular cleaning?							
FIRST AID:							
Cabinets and contents clean and orderly?							
No replacement materials required?							
Stretchers in position?							
Emergency numbers displayed?							
GENERAL LIGHTING:							
Adequate artificial lighting?							
Good natural lighting?							
Windows, clean, admitting plenty of daylight?							
Room suitable colour to provide light reflection from walls and ceilings?							
No direct or reflected glare?							
Light fittings clean and in good repair?							
Emergency lighting operable?							
Is the lighting steady?							

Check Points *Please tick appropriate rating	Ratings						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
INDOOR CLIMATE:							
Air temperature suitable?							
Clothing appropriate to heat load as well as safety considerations?							
Supply of liquids?							
Fresh air intake clear of exhaust gases?							
Protective shields for heat sources?							
NOISE/VIBRATION:							
Hearing protection available and worn appropriately?							
Noisy machinery labelled with signs indicating requirement for hearing protection?							
Noise level does not interfere with alarm signals or other communication?							
Shock absorbers in place to avoid unnecessary vibration?							

Check Points *Please tick appropriate rating	Ratings						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
CHEMICALS:							
Chemicals stored appropriately?							
Are all containers of hazardous substances adequately labelled?							
Have MSDS been obtained for all hazardous substances in use?							
Does the workplace have a hazardous substances register listing the chemicals used at the workplace?							
Has an assessment of the risks of exposure to hazardous							

substances been carried out?							
Have recommended control measures been put in place?							
Are there written procedures for the introduction of new substances to the workplace?							
Is air monitoring necessary? If yes, has this been scheduled and a competent person appointed to do it?							
Has a training program for people using hazardous substances been established?							
Have all the people who should be trained received training?							
Have all the confined spaces on the site been identified and work procedures written down including 'permit to enter' procedures?							
Are health checks necessary? If yes, have these been scheduled and a competent person appointed to do them?							
Are dangerous goods stored in compliance with the dangerous goods Regulations?							

Check Points *Please tick appropriate rating	**Ratings**						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
Have emergency procedures been established and documented?							
Do regular emergency drills take place? Are drills evaluated and observed shortcomings addressed?							
Are waste hazardous substances disposed of appropriately? Are there written procedures for this?							
VEHICLES:							
Defective vehicles?							
GENERAL:							
Housekeeping? Good throughout?							
Doorways and aisles clear?							
Oily rags or other greasy materials kept in self closing cans?							
Combustible cartons, etc., carefully stacked?							
Areas requiring clean-up or removal of surplus plant?							
SMOKING:							
Any evidence of smoking in unauthorised areas?							
All employees understand smoking regulations?							
NO SMOKING areas properly posted?							

Check Points *Please tick appropriate rating	Ratings						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
MANUAL HANDLING:							
Is there frequent or prolonged bending down where the hand passes below mid-thigh height?							
Is there frequent or prolonged reaching above the shoulder?							
Is there frequent or prolonged bending due to extended reach forward?							
Is there frequent or prolonged twisting of the back?							
Are awkward postures assumed frequently or over prolonged periods, that is, postures that are not forward facing and upright?							
Is manual handling performed frequently or for long time periods by the employee(s)?							
Are loads moved or carried over long distances?							
Is the weight of the object:							
(a) more than 4.5 kg and handled from a seated position?							
(b) more than 16 kg and handled in a working posture other than seated?							
(c) more than 55 kg?							
Note: Weight is not used to prescribe absolute limits, but is one of the important factors to be considered when assessing and controlling risk.							
For pushing, pulling or other application of forces: are large push/pulling forces involved?							
Is the load difficult or awkward to handle, for example, due to its size, shape, temperature, instability or unpredictability?							
Is it difficult or unsafe to get adequate grip of the load?							

Check Points *Please tick appropriate rating	Ratings						Comments
	Not Present	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score	
	0	2	4	7	10		
FIRE AND EMERGENCY EVACUATION:							
Extinguishers in place, recently serviced?							
Signs indicating specific use of extinguishers in place?							
Adequate directions towards fire exits?							
Exit doors easily opened from inside?							
Exits clear of obstructions?							
Serviceable alarm system?							
Sprinkler system operable?							
Catwalks and ladders clear?							
Do you have a team trained to take responsibility in an emergency?							
Do you have a current emergency communication plan in place (including current telephone numbers)?							
Do you ensure that team members understand their roles to avoid having to deliver explanations during an emergency?							
Do you test your emergency communication plan?							

List any other unsatisfactory conditions found:

Distribution:

General Manager

Maintenance Engineer

Safety Committee Chairman

Operations Manager Signed:.....

Production Manager

OH&S Co-ordinator Dated:.....

REMEDIAL ACTION STATEMENT REPORT

Date of Initiation:

Identified Risk	Action To Be Taken	By Whom	Target Date	Date Completed	Signature

RISK ASSESSMENT RECORD

Record of Risk Assessment

Location, process activity, product part of other subject of assessment.

Person(s)/Group(s) at risk:

Property at risk:

Date:

Assessment leader:

Next Review Date: or any earlier date on which a change in knowledge or circumstances occurs which might affect validity.

HAZARD/HARM POTENTIAL RATING		FREQUENCY	X	SEVERITY	=	RISK
1			X	=		
2			X		=	
3			X		=	
4			X		=	
EXISTING MEASURES OF OTHER FACTORS WHICH DECREASE RISKS						
1			X		=	
2			X		=	
3			X		=	
4			X		=	
FACTORS WHICH INCREASE RISKS						
1			X		=	
2			X		=	
3			X		=	
4			X		=	
OTHER MEASURES NECESSARY						
1			X		=	
2			X		=	
3			X		=	
4					=	