



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. 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). The evaluation aims to shed light on employer motivations for adopting such systems, the processes involved in implementing and certifying them, and the expected and actual benefits of their use.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the Department's research priorities. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [Employer Compliance and Enforcement – Wages and Earnings](#) programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

Key Takeaways

- Voluntary consensus standards signal to stakeholders that the adopting organizations conform to a set of recognized best practices for OHSMS, and exist at the national and international levels.
- Employers adopting OHSMS have the option to certify their conformance to the management system standards, by contracting with a certification body (sometimes called an auditor).
- Certification bodies follow a rigorous set of procedures when conducting their assessments. Certification audits involve reviews of OHSMS documentation, interviews with management and workers, and physical inspections of the workplace. The intensity of the audit (number of auditor days) is scaled to the complexity of the workplace and number of employees. To maintain certification, organizations must undergo annual surveillance audits and a full recertification audit takes place every three years. Certifications may be suspended or withdrawn if the organization fails to maintain sound OHS risk management practices.
- Accreditation of certification bodies helps ensure that assessors are competent, independent, and free of conflicts of interest. Accreditation bodies operate under principles established through their participation in the International Accreditation Forum. In the U.S., the two main accreditation bodies for OHSMS are the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) and the International Accreditation Service (IAS).

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)





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TIMEFRAME: 2018-2022

SUBMITTED BY: Eastern Research Group, Inc.

DATE PREPARED: December 2021

PARTNER AGENCY: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

SPONSOR: Chief Evaluation Office

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CEO sponsors independent evaluations and research conducted by external third-party contractors in accordance with the established [Department of Labor Evaluation Policy](#). The resulting reports represent findings from the independent research and do not represent DOL positions or policies. Reports are reviewed by academic peers (e.g., Technical Working Groups), relevant DOL agency and program officials, and CEO technical staff. Other outside technical reviews are conducted as needed. Most studies are multi-year and may have multiple reports. All evaluations undergo extensive technical review at the design, data collection and analysis stage, and OMB review and approval of data collection per the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). Final reports undergo an additional independent expert technical review. Once all technical and subject matter reviews have been completed and the evaluators have responded to reviewer comments, the contractor finalizes the report, including preparing it to meet all Section 508 compliance requirements as appropriate. Many projects also have short policy briefs that summarize the main findings. All reports contain appropriate legal disclaimers, as specified in contractual provisions. Some reports address critical or priority programs or issues, in which case an internal briefing is conducted for Departmental leadership at least one week before release.

