

System Audit v Risk Register Guide

Having a system audit or reviewing a risk register are both actions that facilitate high level assessment of OSH performance. It's not always possible (or necessary) to do both, so you may need to consider which process meets your current needs. The table below compares the strengths and weaknesses of the two processes in the context of the most common "desired purposes" that lead organisations to undertake them.

Table Key: **Green** = Better

Desired Purpose	System Audit (WorkSafe Plan)	Risk Register Review
Communicate OSH performance to Executive	Score system provides simple, quickly read indicator. Standardised assessment process = independent legitimacy.	Reading over a risk register and its summary report generally requires more engagement than reading over the front page or two of a System Audit Report. Strong if the Executive are already engaged in safety management.
As an internal measure of OSH performance	A system audit covers the key areas of OSH management that all organisations should have. Enables comparison of OSH management performance over time whenever the process is repeated.	Facilitates detailed assessment of OSH management performance, with focused attention on areas of highest risk. Enables comparison of OSH management performance over time whenever risk levels are re-assessed.
As a measure of OSH performance v other organisations	Enables comparison of OSH management performance to an established independent standard. As well as to other organisations who have achieved WorkSafe Plan Awards (listed on WorkSafe site).	Does not facilitate comparison to external organisations
As a quantifiable measure	Provides a score for system elements and an overall system score.	Provides a risk level rating for each hazard/OSH risk.
As a process required by legislation	System audits themselves, are not legally required. They assist greatly though with identifying legislatively required gaps. NOTE: Public Sector Agencies are required by PSC Circular to complete a system audit at least every 5 years.	The process of risk management itself is legally required.

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To facilitate legislatively required communication and consultation	<p>Auditor investigation does incorporate employee consultation, but it's generally limited and focused on questions required by the Audit tool.</p> <p>There is minimal legislatively required communication and consultation inherent in the process.</p>	<p>Consultation with employees is required in the risk register review regarding hazard identification, controls and improvement opportunities.</p> <p>Legislatively required communication and consultation is inherent in the process.</p>
To resolve internal conflict regarding OSH management issues in the workplace	The audit report (ie. findings and recommendations) tends to serve as some form of judiciary where it touches on issues that are the subject of internal differences.	<p>The risk assessment process includes and engages employees and managers.</p> <p>Points of difference are discussed and views tend to moderate and converge through the process.</p>
To identify OSH management gaps	Identifies process and practice gaps considered essential in a health and safety management system.	Identifies hazard and OSH risk issues that do not meet required practices. Focusses attention on the OSH risks of most importance to the organization.
To identify opportunities for improvements	Audit identifies system elements that require improvement. Consultation with employees regarding opportunities for improvements occurs but is not integral to process completion.	Depends on the facilitator of the review. Professional reviews are generally done so that reputable OSH Management System requirements and Legislative Requirements are considered in control evaluation. This is cross referenced with consultation with staff to identify tailored recommendations.
To assist with prioritizing of resources	Recommendations are based on gaps against the audit tool. Priorities are not as clearly expressed as with a Risk Register.	Issues of greatest risk are clearly identified by risk level rating.