

Questions about Management Systems

Management systems are the formal criteria and processes that guide decisions, monitor activities and measure results against defined goals.

There are some questions you should always ask yourself when creating, analyzing or identifying management system improvement opportunities.

Company Policies

- Are procedures, standards, expectations, and potential punishments and rewards written down?
- How are they communicated and how do you know they are understood?
- Are policies updated to reflect changes in regulations or workplace environment?



Health and Safety Best Practices

- Who is responsible for tracking and implementing current best practices for the managed activity?
- How are these practices conveyed?
- Are observation processes in place to gauge whether best practices are being used?
- How do you handle someone deviating from best practices?

Hazard Recognition

- Do you have mandated hazard signs and Safety Data Sheets?
- Do you regularly perform job hazard analyses or related assessments?
- How are employees taught to recognize and respond to hazards?
- Is the process updated when there are changes to a procedure, a site, equipment or materials?
- Are all employees encouraged to report potential hazards, including unsafe behaviors?

Training

- Do you design curricula to cover a range of organizational objectives – not just compliance, but risk management, culture-building, performance, avoiding a knowledge drain as older workers retire, and so on?
- Does your company deliver and track training effectively and efficiently?
- Do you use the best training methods for your subjects and audience? These methods may include a blend of computer-based, hands-on and classroom training.
- Is your training engaging?
- Does it fit the diverse learning styles and language needs of your workforce?
- How do you ensure learning and retention?

Accountability and Enforcement

- What checks and controls are in place to ensure that employees and managers adhere to policies and meet standards?
- What happens if they don't?

Engineering and Design

Engineering and design includes everything from specific steps in a workflow, to work environment, to ergonomic variables.

- Are engineering and design decisions aligned with safety and health objectives?
- Are adequate safeguards in place?
- Do you solicit input from frontline workers to guide and evaluate engineering and design?

Risk Assessment/Acceptance

- Does management have a realistic understanding of all potential risks?
- Do you use a risk severity index or similar analytic to quantify risk and guide the allocation of available risk prevention resources?
- Do people in all levels of the organization understand and act upon risk priorities?

Excessive Workloads or Other Conflicting Demands

- Do other managerial goals or policies undermine safety and health objectives or create confusion in the workforce?
- Are production incentives in place that may lead workers to use unsafe shortcuts?
- Are new hires properly screened?
- Are staff levels sufficient to avoid safety and health risks caused by overwork and fatigue?

Metrics

- Do you measure everything that you can and should measure?
- What do you benchmark performance against?
- Do you use leading indicators as well as lagging indicators?
- How do you present and report metrics?

Documentation

Documentation includes not just records required for compliance, but also records that can mitigate legal liability if an incident occurs.

- Is documentation accurate and up-to-date?
- Are records easily accessible?

