

OHSAS18001, ROLO AND RISK ASSESSMENT



Operating a formal management system to the requirements of standard OHSAS18001 will help you improve your company's existing health and safety controls. **Jodie Read** reports.

A well structured health and safety management system implemented to OHSAS18001 can help safeguard the wellbeing of employees, contractors and members of the public through effective risk management.

In the March edition, we explored the Environmental Management Standard ISO14001. OHSAS18001 mirrors that of its environmental counterpart and provides an excellent framework for managing health and safety.

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION, RISK ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires that risk assessments are carried out. For anyone employing five or more people, these need to be documented. Anybody requiring certification to some safety schemes such as CHAS or Constructionline will also need to submit evidence of suitable and sufficient risk assessments in order to obtain certification.

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has published free guidance (Five Steps to Risk Assessment) <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf> to help companies assess health and safety risks in the workplace.

ROLO DELEGATES UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF RISK

The Register of Landbased Operatives (ROLO) Health, Safety and Environmental awareness course is available to landscapers, grounds maintenance, tree surgeons and ecologists. Staff at all levels on the course have consistently

reinforced the idea that the people doing the job best understand the hazards that exist, and the most suitable control measures. Examples highlighted by delegates attending ROLO courses have included:

- Grounds maintenance technicians strimming grass for a housing association understand that, in addition to the 'normal' hazards, they face noise, vibration, flying debris such as stones, and vigilance for hypodermic needles, which have the potential to transmit blood-borne viruses.
- Operatives working on highways are aware that they could be struck by motorists and understand the potentially fatal consequences.
- Site work means that ground conditions are likely to be variable. Weather conditions, gradient of slope and rabbit burrows can all affect the likelihood of slips, trips and falls.
- Installers of decking solutions for city apartments recognise hazards such as transporting materials and work at height, especially while installing new balustrades.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Identifying hazards is not difficult, and in each

case, people understood what control measures were available to them. Without a structured health and safety management system in place, however, people don't always see the importance of recording their findings on a formal risk assessment.

Alternatively, they rely on a suite of generic risk assessments that may not be site specific or take into account variable factors, such as weather conditions at the time of undertaking the work. That in turn means that companies run the very real risk of not taking into account the very thing that makes a job more hazardous.

By operating a formal management system, to the requirements of OHSAS18001, companies are more likely to keep risk assessments and control measures under regular review because at the heart of the standard, Clause 4.3.1 focuses on the need to establish, implement and maintain a system for hazard identification and the implementation of controls which are necessary to protect people from harm.

Far from being a chore, done well, this will help identify and implement ways in which companies can improve existing health and safety controls to keep people safe.

ABOUT JODIE READ



Jodie Read is the Managing Director of Penarth Management Limited which is an affiliate member of the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI).

Jodie is one of only a few approved ROLO

health and safety trainers in the country.

If readers have any queries regarding ROLO, OHSAS18001, risk assessments or any other aspect of health and safety they are welcome to contact Jodie via e-mail: jodie@penarth.co.uk or by telephone on 029 2070 3328.