# 4.3 Design risk-informed OHSES controls for organisational change scenarios.

## Learning Outcome

By the end of this session, learners should be able to design risk-informed Occupational Health, Safety, Environment, and Sustainability (OHSES) controls for organisational change scenarios. Learners will examine how organisational changes introduce new risks, apply structured change impact assessment methodologies, develop proportionate risk controls for dynamic environments, and evaluate leadership responsibilities in ensuring safe and sustainable organisational transformation.

## Introduction

Change is an inevitable part of organisational growth and survival. Organisations continually evolve through restructuring, mergers, acquisitions, technological innovation, automation, digital transformation, expansion into new markets, outsourcing, workforce changes, and regulatory reforms. While these changes create opportunities for growth and competitiveness, they also introduce new and often unforeseen Occupational Health, Safety, Environment, and Sustainability (OHSES) risks.

Without effective planning and governance, organisational change can increase workplace accidents, environmental incidents, operational failures, employee stress, and business disruption. Consequently, modern organisations adopt a risk-informed approach to change management, ensuring that potential OHSES risks are identified, assessed, and controlled before changes are implemented.

Designing effective OHSES controls during organisational change requires strategic leadership, proactive risk assessment, stakeholder engagement, and continual monitoring to ensure that change improves organisational performance without compromising safety, health, environmental protection, or sustainability.

## What is Organisational Change?

Organisational change refers to any planned or unplanned alteration to an organisation's structure, processes, technologies, workforce, culture, or strategic direction that may affect its operations or performance.

Examples include:

- Organisational restructuring
- Business expansion
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Downsizing
- Introduction of new technology
- Automation and artificial intelligence
- New production processes
- Outsourcing
- Relocation of facilities
- Regulatory changes
- Climate adaptation initiatives

Every significant change has the potential to create new OHSES risks.

## What are Risk-Informed OHSES Controls?

Risk-informed OHSES controls are preventive and protective measures designed using systematic risk assessment to manage hazards associated with organisational change.
These controls ensure that:

- Risks are identified before implementation.
- Decisions are evidence-based.
- Controls are proportionate to the level of risk.
- Workers remain protected throughout the change process.
- Business continuity is maintained.
- Organisational resilience is strengthened.

## Why Risk-Informed Change Management is Important

Effective change management helps organisations:

- Prevent workplace accidents.
- Reduce environmental impacts.
- Protect employee wellbeing.
- Ensure legal compliance.
- Minimise operational disruption.
- Improve organisational resilience.
- Support sustainable business growth.
- Build stakeholder confidence.

Failure to manage change effectively has contributed to many major industrial accidents worldwide.

## 1. Identification of Emerging Risks During Restructuring, Growth or Transformation

Organisational change often introduces risks that were not previously present.
Emerging risks may develop because:

- New technology is introduced.
- Employees perform unfamiliar tasks.
- Reporting structures change.
- Workloads increase.
- Contractors are engaged.
- Communication becomes ineffective.
- Organisational knowledge is lost.
- New legal requirements apply.

Risk identification should begin before change is implemented.

## Common Organisational Change Scenarios

**Restructuring**

**Possible risks:**

- Reduced supervision
- Increased workload
- Role ambiguity
- Communication failures
- Reduced employee morale
- Stress and fatigue

**Business Growth**

**Possible risks:**

- Rapid recruitment
- Inexperienced workers
- Capacity limitations
- Insufficient training
- Infrastructure strain
- Increased environmental impacts

## Common Organisational Change Scenarios

Mergers and Acquisitions

Emerging risks:

- Different safety cultures
- Conflicting procedures
- Leadership uncertainty
- Inconsistent reporting systems
- Cultural integration challenges

Climate and Sustainability Transition

Examples include:

- Renewable energy projects
- Decarbonisation
- Circular economy initiatives

Emerging risks may involve:

- New technologies
- Supply chain disruption
- Workforce reskilling
- Regulatory uncertainty

## Risk Identification Techniques

Organisations may use:

- Hazard Identification (HAZID)
- Job Safety Analysis (JSA)
- Hazard and Operability Study (HAZOP)
- Bowtie Analysis
- Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)
- Brainstorming workshops
- SWOT Analysis
- PESTLE Analysis
- Worker consultation
- Lessons learned from previous projects

Using multiple techniques improves the completeness of risk identification.

## 2. Change Impact Assessment Methodologies

Change impact assessment evaluates how proposed changes affect people, processes, technology, legal compliance, and organisational performance.

Step 1 – Define the Change
Clearly describe:

- What is changing?
- Why is the change necessary?
- Which areas are affected?
- Who will be impacted?

## 2. Change Impact Assessment Methodologies

Step 2 – Identify Stakeholders

Examples:

- Employees
- Contractors
- Managers
- Regulators
- Customers
- Suppliers
- Communities
- Investors

Understanding stakeholder concerns improves decision quality.

## 2. Change Impact Assessment Methodologies

Step 3 – Assess OHSES Impacts
Evaluate potential impacts on:
Health

- Stress
- Fatigue
- Occupational illness
- Mental wellbeing

Safety

- New hazards
- Increased exposure
- Competency gaps
- Emergency preparedness

## 2. Change Impact Assessment Methodologies

Environment

- Emissions
- Waste
- Pollution
- Resource consumption

Sustainability

- Social impacts
- ESG commitments
- Climate resilience
- Long-term viability

## 2. Change Impact Assessment Methodologies

Step 4 – Evaluate Risk

Assess:

- Likelihood
- Consequences
- Existing controls
- Residual risk

Prioritise high-risk changes.

Step 5 – Develop Action Plan

Include:

- New procedures
- Training
- Communication
- Engineering improvements
- Monitoring arrangements

## 2. Change Impact Assessment Methodologies

Step 6 – Review Effectiveness
After implementation:

- Monitor KPIs.
- Conduct audits.
- Review incidents.
- Gather employee feedback.
- Update controls where necessary.

# Management of Change (MoC)

Many organisations implement a formal Management of Change (MoC) process to ensure that all significant organisational, technical, procedural, or personnel changes are systematically reviewed before implementation.

A robust MoC process typically includes:

- Defining the proposed change.
- Conducting multidisciplinary risk assessments.
- Reviewing legal and regulatory requirements.
- Obtaining management approval.
- Consulting affected workers.
- Delivering necessary training.
- Updating procedures and documentation.
- Monitoring implementation and reviewing outcomes.

MoC is a key element of ISO 45001, ISO 14001, and major process safety management systems.



# 3. Design of Proportionate Risk Controls in Dynamic Environments

Risk controls should be proportionate to the level of risk.
Higher risks require stronger controls.
The Hierarchy of Controls provides the preferred order for selecting risk controls.




**Hierarchy of Controls**

**1. Elimination**

Remove the hazard completely.
Example:
Remove hazardous chemicals by redesigning the process.

# 3. Design of Proportionate Risk Controls in Dynamic Environments

**2. Substitution**
Replace with a safer alternative.
Example:
Use water-based chemicals instead of solvent-based products.

**3. Engineering Controls**
Physically isolate people from hazards.
Examples:

- Machine guarding
- Ventilation systems
- Automated handling equipment
- Noise barriers



# 3. Design of Proportionate Risk Controls in Dynamic Environments

**4. Administrative Controls**

Manage exposure through procedures.

Examples:

- Safe work procedures
- Training
- Permit-to-work systems
- Job rotation
- Supervision

**5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Provide protection when other controls cannot eliminate the risk.

Examples:

- Helmets
- Respirators
- Gloves
- Safety footwear

**PPE should always be the last line of defence.**



# Designing Controls for Dynamic Environments

Organisational change often creates rapidly changing conditions.
Controls should therefore be:

- Flexible
- Scalable
- Continuously monitored
- Regularly reviewed
- Evidence-based

Examples include:

- Temporary barriers during construction.
- Additional supervision for new employees.
- Increased inspections during commissioning.
- Enhanced emergency preparedness during transition.
- Digital monitoring systems for real-time risk management.

# 4. Leadership Responsibilities During Organisational Change

Successful organisational change depends on effective leadership.
Leaders establish direction, allocate resources, communicate expectations, and promote a positive safety culture throughout the transition.

**Leadership Responsibilities**

**Strategic Direction**

Leaders ensure that OHSES objectives remain aligned with organisational strategy during change.



**Visible Commitment**

**Leaders should:**

- Demonstrate commitment.
- Participate in safety activities.
- Engage with employees.
- Encourage reporting.

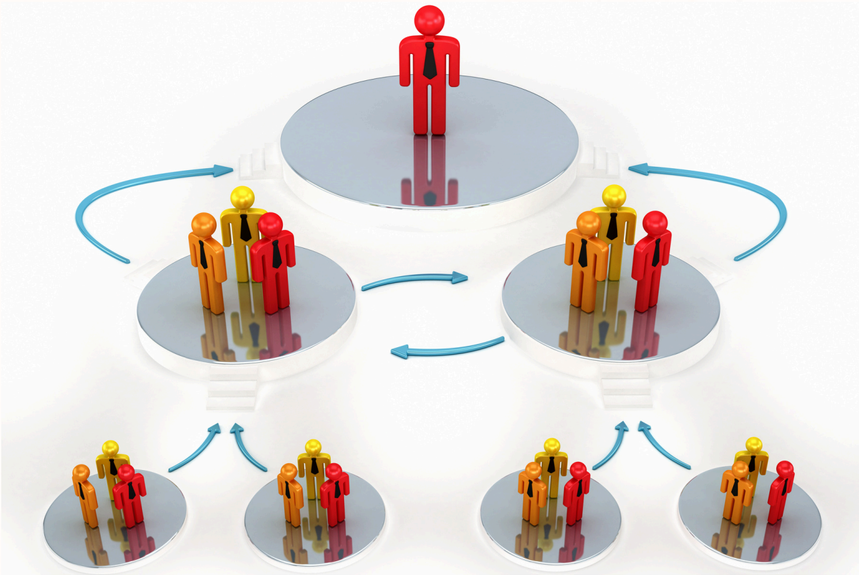
Visible leadership builds confidence.

# 4. Leadership Responsibilities During Organisational Change

Resource Allocation

Provide adequate:

- Budget
- Personnel
- Equipment
- Training
- Technology



Communication

Effective communication should explain:

- Why change is occurring.
- Expected benefits.
- New risks.
- Required behaviours.
- Available support.

Transparent communication reduces uncertainty and resistance.

# 4. Leadership Responsibilities During Organisational Change

Consultation

Workers should participate in:

- Risk assessments.
- Procedure development.
- Incident reviews.
- Improvement initiatives.

Participation improves ownership and control effectiveness.

Monitoring

Leaders should review:

- KPIs
- Audits
- Incident trends
- Employee feedback
- Compliance performance

Monitoring ensures that controls remain effective.

# International Standards Supporting Risk-Informed Organisational Change

**ISO 45001:2018**

**Clause 6 requires organisations to:**

- Address risks and opportunities.
- Plan changes systematically.
- Evaluate impacts on the OH&S management system.

**ISO 14001:2015**

**Supports:**

- Environmental risk management.
- Life-cycle thinking.
- Environmental change planning.

**ISO 31000:2018**

**Provides principles for:**

- Enterprise risk management.
- Strategic risk assessment.
- Decision-making under uncertainty.



# 4. Leadership Responsibilities During Organisational Change

**ISO 22301:2019**

**Supports:**

- Business continuity.
- Organisational resilience.
- Crisis preparedness.

**COSO Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)**

**Integrates:**

- Governance.
- Strategy.
- Risk.
- Performance.

**ESG Principles**

**Support responsible organisational transformation by considering:**

- Environmental impacts.
- Social responsibilities.
- Governance effectiveness.



# Critical Evaluation

Organisational change is a significant source of emerging OHSES risks, making risk-informed planning essential for sustainable success. Effective organisations proactively identify hazards associated with restructuring, technological innovation, growth, or transformation and apply structured methodologies such as Management of Change (MoC), HAZOP, FMEA, and ISO 31000 risk assessment principles to evaluate potential impacts. Proportionate risk controls, guided by the Hierarchy of Controls, enable organisations to reduce risks while maintaining operational flexibility in dynamic environments. However, technical controls alone are insufficient. Successful change depends on strong leadership, effective communication, meaningful worker consultation, and continual performance monitoring. Organisations that integrate these principles into strategic decision-making are better positioned to protect people, the environment, organisational reputation, and long-term business resilience.



## Reflective Questions

1. Why do organisational changes frequently introduce new or emerging OHSES risks?
2. How does a formal Management of Change (MoC) process improve organisational safety and governance?
3. Compare the effectiveness of HAZOP, FMEA, and Bowtie Analysis when assessing risks during organisational transformation.
4. Why should risk controls be proportionate and adaptable in dynamic working environments?
5. Evaluate the role of leadership and worker consultation in ensuring successful organisational change while maintaining OHSES performance.

## Key Takeaways

- Organisational change—including restructuring, growth, technological innovation, mergers, and sustainability initiatives—creates new OHSES risks that require proactive management.
- Emerging risks should be identified using structured techniques such as HAZID, HAZOP, FMEA, Bowtie Analysis, Job Safety Analysis, SWOT, and PESTLE.
- A formal Management of Change (MoC) process ensures that changes are systematically assessed, approved, implemented, and reviewed.
- Risk controls should be designed using the Hierarchy of Controls, ensuring they are proportionate to the level of risk and adaptable to changing operational conditions.
- Effective leadership, clear communication, adequate resources, and meaningful worker consultation are essential to successful organisational transformation.
- International standards such as ISO 45001, ISO 14001, ISO 31000, ISO 22301, COSO ERM, and ESG principles provide structured frameworks for managing organisational change, protecting people and the environment, and strengthening long-term organisational resilience.

# Thank you