



3.1 Evaluate Methods for Assessing Legal Compliance and System Effectiveness

Learning Outcome By the end of this session, learners should be able to evaluate methods used to assess legal compliance and the effectiveness of Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OH&SMS). Learners will examine internal audit methodologies, inspection frameworks, performance indicators, compliance metrics, and monitoring tools used to verify legal compliance and drive continual improvement.

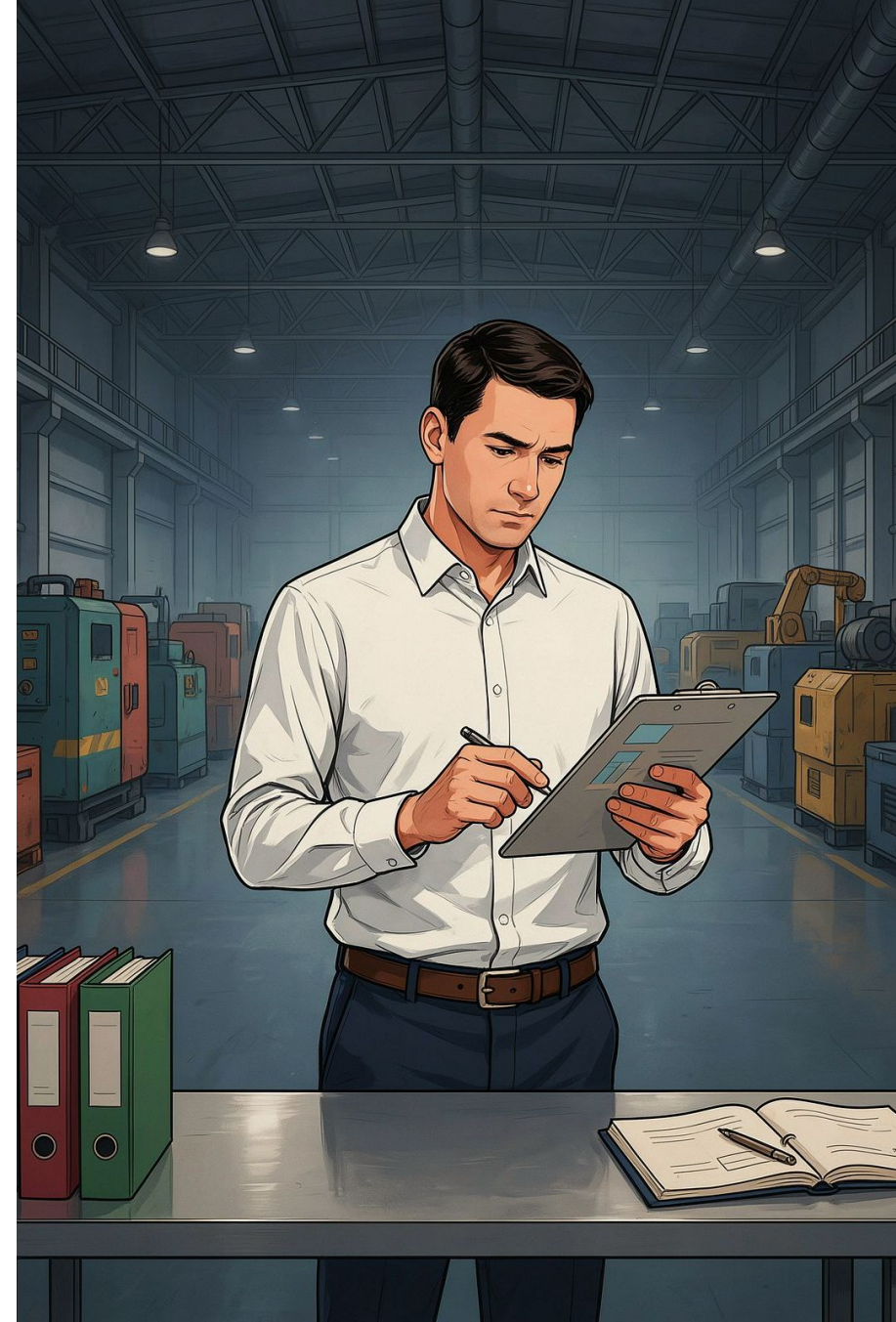
Learning Objectives

After completing this topic, learners will be able to:

- Evaluate internal audit methodologies used to assess legal compliance.
- Analyse the use of performance indicators and compliance metrics.
- Assess the role of workplace inspections in monitoring OH&S performance.
- Evaluate compliance monitoring tools used to measure system effectiveness.

Introduction

Implementing an Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OH&SMS) is only the first step towards achieving effective health and safety performance. Organisations must continually evaluate whether the system is functioning as intended, meeting legal obligations, and supporting organisational objectives. ISO 45001 emphasises that organisations should regularly monitor, measure, analyse, and evaluate their OH&S performance. This is achieved through audits, inspections, performance indicators, compliance monitoring, and management reviews. These evaluation methods provide objective evidence of system effectiveness and identify opportunities for continual improvement.



Why Evaluate Legal Compliance and System Effectiveness?

Regular evaluation enables organisations to:

Verify compliance with legal requirements.

Assess whether controls are working effectively.

Identify weaknesses before incidents occur.

Demonstrate due diligence.

Improve organisational governance.

Support continual improvement.

Build confidence among regulators and stakeholders.

 Without regular evaluation, organisations may unknowingly operate with ineffective controls or non-compliance.



1. Internal Audit Methodologies

An internal audit is a systematic, independent, and documented process used to determine whether an organisation's OH&SMS conforms to planned arrangements, legal requirements, and ISO 45001. Unlike inspections, audits evaluate the effectiveness of the management system rather than individual workplace conditions.

Objectives of Internal Audits

Internal audits aim to:

- Verify legal compliance.
- Assess conformity with ISO 45001.
- Evaluate implementation of policies and procedures.
- Identify non-conformities.
- Assess effectiveness of risk controls.
- Identify opportunities for improvement.

Types of Internal Audits

System Audit

Evaluates the entire OH&SMS. Example: Reviewing whether all ISO 45001 clauses are effectively implemented.

Process Audit

Examines specific organisational processes. Example: Auditing the Permit-to-Work process.

Compliance Audit

Focuses on legal and regulatory compliance. Example: Verifying compliance with legislation relating to hazardous substances.

Follow-up Audit

Confirms whether corrective actions have been effectively implemented following previous audits.

Internal Audit Process

A typical audit includes:

01

Audit planning.

03

Opening meeting.

05

Interviews with employees.

07

Identification of findings.

09

Audit report.

02

Review of documents.

04

Site observations.

06

Collection of objective evidence.

08

Closing meeting.

10

Follow-up of corrective actions.

1. Inspection Frameworks

A workplace inspection is a planned examination of the workplace to identify unsafe conditions, unsafe behaviours, and potential legal non-compliance. Inspections are generally more operational than audits.

Types of Inspections

Routine workplace inspections.

Supervisor inspections.

Management safety tours.

Behavioural safety observations.

Equipment inspections.

Regulatory inspections.

Effective Inspection Framework

An effective inspection should include:

- Preparation using checklists.
- Observation of work activities.
- Consultation with employees.
- Identification of hazards.
- Documentation of findings.
- Risk prioritisation.
- Assignment of corrective actions.
- Follow-up inspections.

Regular inspections enable organisations to identify hazards before they result in incidents.

Difference Between Audits and Inspections

Audit	Inspection
Evaluates the management system	Examines workplace conditions and activities
Focuses on compliance and effectiveness	Focuses on identifying hazards
Conducted periodically	Conducted more frequently
Strategic	Operational

Both are essential components of an effective OH&SMS.

1. Performance Indicators and Compliance Metrics

Performance indicators measure how effectively an organisation manages occupational health and safety. They provide objective evidence for evaluating legal compliance and system performance.

Leading Indicators

Leading indicators measure activities that help prevent incidents. Examples include:

- Number of risk assessments completed.
- Safety training completion rates.
- Workplace inspections completed.
- Corrective actions closed on time.
- Safety observations submitted.
- Emergency drills conducted.

Leading indicators are proactive because they measure preventive activities.

Lagging Indicators

Lagging indicators measure events that have already occurred. Examples include:

- Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR).
- Total Recordable Injury Rate (TRIR).
- Number of reportable incidents.
- Occupational illness cases.
- Environmental incidents.
- Enforcement notices received.

Lagging indicators are reactive because they measure outcomes.

- ❏ Leading indicators help prevent incidents, while lagging indicators measure the results of organisational performance. A balanced combination provides a more complete assessment of system effectiveness.

1. Compliance Monitoring Tools

Compliance monitoring ensures that legal obligations continue to be met as legislation, organisational activities, and risks change. Common monitoring tools include:

Legal registers.

Compliance checklists.

Internal audits.

Workplace inspections.

KPI dashboards.

Incident reporting systems.

Risk registers.

Management reviews.

**Digital compliance
management software.**

Compliance Dashboard

Many organisations use dashboards to monitor:



Audit completion.



Legal compliance status.



Incident trends.



Corrective action progress.



Training completion.



Risk assessment status.

Dashboards enable managers to identify issues quickly and make evidence-based decisions.

International Standards Supporting Compliance Evaluation

Several international standards support the evaluation of legal compliance and system effectiveness:

ISO 45001:2018

Monitoring, measurement, analysis, evaluation, internal audits, and management review.

ISO 19011:2018

Guidelines for auditing management systems.

ISO 31000:2018

Risk management principles.

ISO 37301:2021

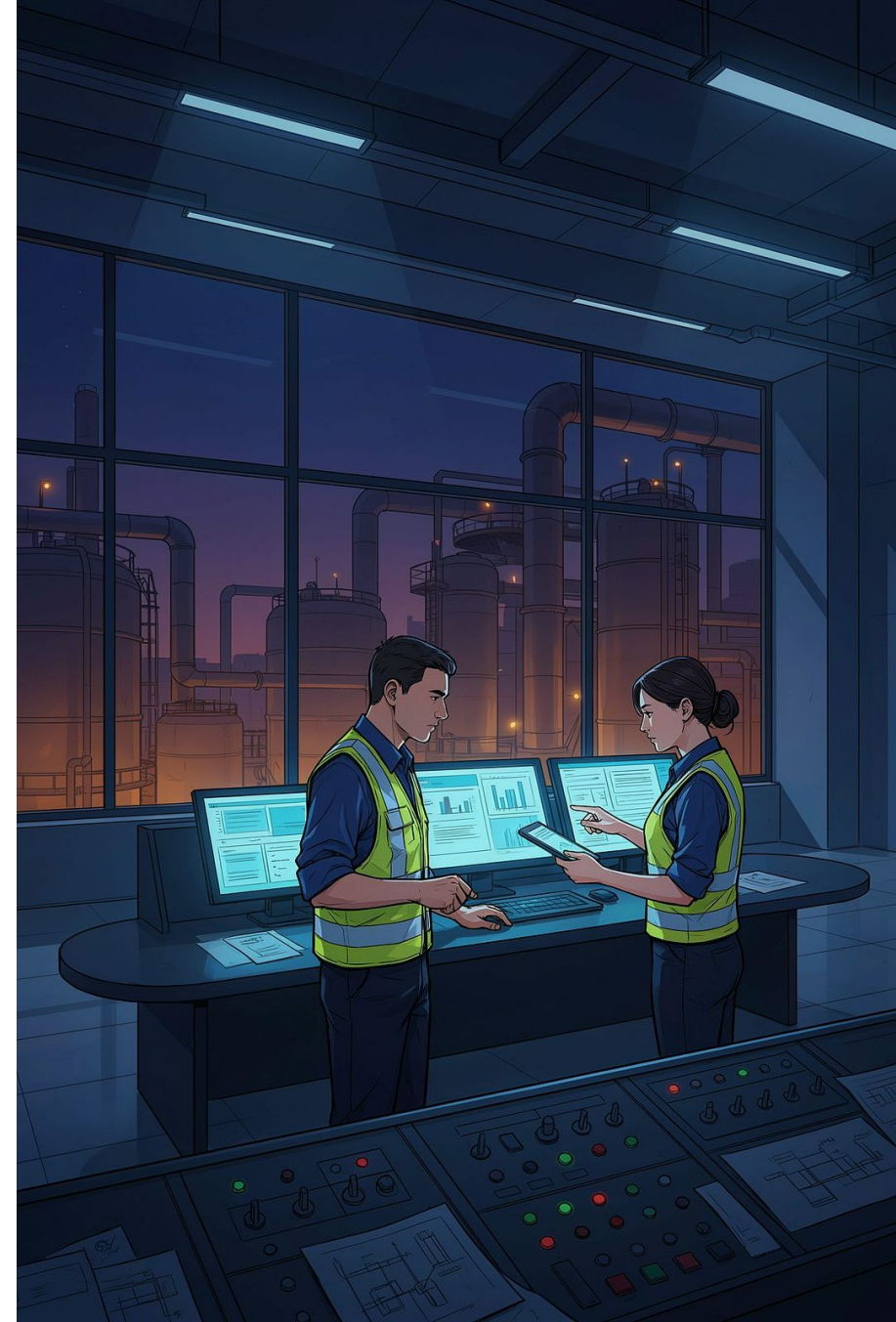
Compliance Management Systems.

Practical Case Study

Scenario A chemical processing company implements ISO 45001 and establishes a programme to evaluate legal compliance. The organisation:

- Conducts quarterly internal audits.
- Performs weekly workplace inspections.
- Uses leading indicators such as safety observations and training completion.
- Monitors lagging indicators including injury rates and environmental incidents.
- Maintains a digital legal register and compliance dashboard.
- Reviews audit findings during quarterly management review meetings.

Outcome: The organisation identifies several compliance gaps before regulatory inspections, implements corrective actions, and demonstrates continual improvement through improved audit scores and reduced incident rates.





Critical Evaluation

No single method can provide a complete assessment of legal compliance or system effectiveness. Internal audits evaluate whether management systems conform to legal and organisational requirements, while inspections identify operational hazards and unsafe conditions. Performance indicators measure both proactive and reactive aspects of OH&S performance, and compliance monitoring tools provide continuous oversight. Organisations that combine these methods develop a more comprehensive understanding of system performance, enabling informed decision-making, stronger governance, and continual improvement. Effective evaluation therefore requires an integrated approach rather than reliance on a single monitoring technique.

Reflective Questions

1

Why are internal audits considered essential for evaluating an OH&SMS?

2

How do workplace inspections differ from management system audits?

3

Why should organisations monitor both leading and lagging performance indicators?

4

How do compliance dashboards improve governance and legal compliance?



Key Takeaways

- Regular evaluation is essential to verify legal compliance and determine whether an OH&SMS is achieving its intended outcomes.
- Internal audits assess management system conformity and effectiveness, while workplace inspections focus on operational hazards and unsafe conditions.
- Leading indicators measure proactive safety activities, whereas lagging indicators measure outcomes such as injuries and incidents.
- Compliance monitoring tools—including legal registers, dashboards, audits, inspections, and management reviews—provide objective evidence of system performance.
- International standards such as ISO 45001, ISO 19011, ISO 31000, and ISO 37301 provide recognised frameworks for evaluating legal compliance, strengthening governance, and supporting continual improvement.