

Stop Audits

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Stop Audits can be a simple and effective way of assessing people and processes and analysing all types of risk across your business.



Introduction

Do we consistently and competently follow procedures and management systems, all day, every day? A Stop Audit is a ‘freeze in time’ process that helps us to find out. It is a powerful tool to immediately assess the environment, behaviours, tasks, operating procedures and permitting systems, revealing both what really happens in day-to-day practice, and whether it is recorded accurately.

How Stop Audits Can be Used

In incidents and losses where the outcome is worse than expected, the primary cause or contributing factor is often:

- Human behaviours or reactions
- Management systems or operating procedures
- Training or consistency of application

A Stop Audit can be extended to all tasks and site areas for all types of potential risks, including:

- Standard operating procedures
- Emergency operating procedures
- Maintenance activities
- Contractor activities
- Security functions
- Permit to work systems, including:
 - Hot work
 - Confined spaces
 - Working at height
- Emergency evacuation plans
- Emergency response plans and teams
- Health and safety related tasks, such as manual handling
- Driver behaviours
- All risk management programmes
- High hazard, critical or sensitive operations
- Maintenance workshops
- Car parks
- Kitchens
- Plant or utility rooms



Undertaking a Stop Audit

To conduct a Stop Audit, an individual will approach the activity or practice and tell everyone involved to 'stop and freeze' – nobody moves. Then, they ask the following questions:

- Is the working environment as expected?
- Are operating procedures being followed as they should be?
- Are all permissions or permits in place that should be?
- Are all permissions or permits completed accurately, reflecting the actual task being completed?
- Are all safety features in place that should be?
- Are all behaviours being followed as they should be?
- Do the people completing the task believe the existing procedures and practices are appropriate?

The length of a Stop Audit is flexible, but it can be extremely effective with the investment of only a few minutes of time.

Once the audit is complete, any good practice can be celebrated and reinforced. Any divergence from expected performance can be assessed for the root cause failing, following which:

- Behaviours and training can be reinforced
- Procedures and practices can be assessed and modified to reflect the actual situation
- Permits and permissions can be reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of the business
- Working environment and topography can be amended

The Benefits of Stop Audits

A management framework that embraces a continual improvement process, including Stop Audits, will see significant benefits in an organisation's risk management performance. It is particularly useful where higher frequency issues, near misses or incidents have been experienced, at specific 'problem' areas on site, or at times of the year when increases in issues can be expected.

If the culture of Stop Audits is extended to empower all employees to challenge the status quo, including training employees to intervene and stop a colleague if a job is being carried out unsafely, there should be an increase in near miss reporting. As a result, the learning and ownership across the organisation should increase, and the number and severity of actual incidents or accidents should reduce.

This is essentially the fundamental risk management process:

1. Establish the context
2. Identify the risks
3. Analyse the risks
4. Evaluate the risks
5. Treat the risks

Checklist

A generic Stop Audits Checklist is presented in Appendix 1 which can be tailored to your own organisation.

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Appendix 1 – Stop Audits Checklist



Location	
Date	
Completed by (name and signature)	

	Stop Audits	Y/N	Comments
1.	Is there a formal Stop Audit programme?		
2.	<p>Are Stop Audits regularly completed?</p> <p>If so, do they include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management programmes? • Permit to work systems? • Working at height? • Hot work? • Confined spaces? • Maintenance activities? • Contractors on site? • Activities in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High hazard areas? ○ Sensitive or critical areas? ○ Utility rooms? ○ Kitchens? 		
3.	Are good practice and best practice findings celebrated and shared with all areas and departments?		
4.	Are findings from Stop Audits reviewed to establish root cause failings?		
5.	<p>Are root cause failings shared with all areas and departments?</p> <p>Are the root cause failings trended by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause? • Task? • Area? • Activity? 		

	Stop Audits Contd.	Y/N	Comments
6..	Are any improvements to address failings tracked through to completion?		
7.	Are written management systems modified and revised as a result of any findings?		
8.	Are training and refresher training frequencies revised as a result of any findings?		
9.	Is the frequency of Stop Audits for specific areas, tasks or operations based on learning and findings?		
10.	Are all employees empowered to complete formal and/or informal Stop Audits?		
11.	Are Stop Audits used specifically when on-site or industry incident or accident data, shows there are known historical higher frequency near misses or incidents?		
12.	Are Stop Audits used specifically to target seasonally occurring or recurring issues?		
13.	Are near miss incidents recorded on site? Are there any links between the number and type of near misses and Stop Audits?		
14.	Additional comments:		

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