

# Follow-up to the Audit of the Occupational Health and Safety Program

***Audit and Evaluation Branch***



Environment  
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### **Report Clearance Steps**

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### **Acronyms used in the report**

ADM	Assistant Deputy Minister
CLC	Canadian Labour Code
DAEC	Departmental Audit and Evaluation Committee
EC	Environment Canada
HRD	Human Resources Directorate
MAP	Management Administration and Policy Table
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety (current name)

### **Acknowledgments**

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## Follow-up to the Audit of the Occupational Health and Safety Program

This is the third follow-up that has been conducted on the Audit of the Occupational Health and Safety Program, which was completed in 1996. This follow-up is being done to determine what actions have resulted from the audit findings and recommendations and to evaluate the appropriateness of the actions taken in response to subsequent follow-up findings. Follow-ups are important as they give senior management a crucial indicator as to the implementation rate of recommendations.

### Context and Current Status

In 1995-96, the Review Branch of Environment Canada (EC) conducted an audit of the department's Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program in part due to legal requirements which increasingly stress that organizations should take a more active role in managing occupational Health and Safety. The audit's focus was on policy and management leadership within the department to provide a safe and healthy workplace, the development and implementation of a Health and Safety framework to ensure due diligence, and the allocation of resources to support the department's commitment to occupational Health and Safety.

The original audit found that although a positive attitude was displayed by managers toward OSH, senior management needed to demonstrate leadership and due diligence in the application and management of occupational health and safety. As well, the audit focused on the need for strengthened planning processes and the allocation of more resources to the OSH function. The report also underlined the importance of OSH training both for employees and for OSH managers and the establishment of monitoring and measurement mechanisms to help evaluate the effectiveness and operation of the OSH program.

Two follow-ups have already been conducted on the Audit of the Occupational Safety and Health Program. The first follow-up was conducted in 1998. At the time of the first follow-up, the Human Resources Directorate (HRD) had asked that another audit of OSH be conducted considering the importance of the issue. During the consultation on the 2000/2001 Long Term Review Plan however, the HRD asked that such an audit be postponed, as an audit was not appropriate at that time. Thus instead of conducting a full audit, a second follow-up was launched in June of 2000 to evaluate the progress made in implementing the recommendations made in the 1996 audit.

The second follow-up to the Audit of the Occupational Safety and Health Program conducted in 2001 found that although several areas of the program had developed well in relation to the original audit recommendations, there remained areas where further attention was still required. The follow-up concluded that the OSH program had not developed to its anticipated potential and was in need of increased attention. Although the follow-up found that there was a basic management framework in place for the OSH program and that a national OSH manual was in the works, the overall development of the OSH Program was still hampered. The follow-up identified four areas of concern that centred on issues of leadership, resourcing, performance measures and reporting. Overall, the follow-up

indicated that with some relatively minor investments, great improvements could be achieved in program implementation.

Since the completion of the second follow-up, there has been a change in personnel in the OSH program as well as a shift of OSH in the HRD in general. The Director of Staff Relations and Classification as well as the Chief of the renamed Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program (formerly referred to as the National OSH Coordinator) are both very new to their positions. Previous to the hiring of a new Chief for the OHS program, the position had been filled on an acting basis by the Regional Co-ordinator from the Atlantic Region since February of 2001. Nonetheless, the new OHS Chief, the Director of Staff Relations and Classification as well as the Director General of the HRD are working hard to find solutions to the problems that have been affecting the OHS program.

## Areas Requiring Attention

This current follow-up has discovered that the program has taken steps that begin to address some of the more inherent and underlying problems of the OHS program. The program is demonstrating a positive and proactive approach to addressing the recommendations made in the Audit and the subsequent follow-ups. The previous two follow-ups identified four areas that were of concern for the OHS program, which included issues surrounding leadership, resourcing, performance measures and reporting. Of these four areas, two have been assessed as partially met and two are not met. The areas of concern that still require attention are:

- The development of a national OHS procedures manual;
- The investigation of the need to define minimum resourcing requirements for OHS in the regions as a means of assuring that OHS is operating as intended across all regions.
- The establishment of performance measures to monitor and identify any impediments to the implementation of the OHS program; and,
- The formalization and establishment of standardized reporting process for national as well as regional OHS activities.

Because of the implications of the Canadian Labour Code (CLC) and the important role the OHS program plays in protecting the health and safety of employees at EC and given the findings of this follow-up, it is recommended that **another follow-up be conducted in two years** to assess the actions taken to address the issues identified in this follow-up.

## Risk

The actions that are being taken by the HRD and the OHS Program are beginning to address some of the underlying issues that have been hampering the OHS Program at EC for some time. Although the HRD and the OHS program are working hard to strengthen the program to ensure that the health and safety of EC employees is protected, there remain issues that need to be addressed in order to bring the program to a level that will adequately address the risk OHS issues pose to the department.

## Areas of Concern and their Assessment

In this section, instead of assessing the actions of the program against the original audit recommendations which have become dated and been superseded, this follow-up will assess the actions the program has taken in relation to the four areas of concern identified in the January 2001 follow-up. The four areas of concern identified in the previous follow-up will be listed in individual tables accompanied by the actions that have been taken subsequent to the follow-up of 2001. Following the table will be an assessment of the actions the program has taken in response to the last follow-up and recommendations will be made to help the program address any outstanding areas of concern.

### Leadership

January 2001 Area of Concern	Subsequent Actions
Managers at all levels need to have a clearer awareness and understanding of their OHS responsibilities and accountabilities as detailed under the Canadian Labour Code (CLC) Part II. It must be realized by managers that all levels of management are potentially liable for any negligence with regard to the implementation of OHS standards. HRD also needs to bring stronger functional leadership to the OHS program to establish minimum requirements, to strengthen action planning, and to ensure a more uniform implementation of the program nationally in terms of the planned implementation of a procedures manual, improved awareness and skills training, and ongoing monitoring of program activities.	<p>A presentation was made to EMB outlining general issues and concerns surrounding OHS at EC as well as compliance issues with the CLC. Following the presentation to EMB it was decided to establish a Policy Committee with an Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) as co-chair to provide senior management direction to the OHS Program.</p> <p>An OHS Directors committee comprised of regional directors responsible for the OHS function in their region has monthly teleconference calls with the DG of HRD. The committee deals with roles and responsibilities, training as well as strategic direction and priorities.</p> <p>A specialist has been contracted to advise on injury compensation, claims with workers compensation boards, undertake policy reviews and revisions as well as to go over the legal requirements of the department related to the new CLC.</p> <p>Three training courses have been developed to educate managers and staff related to OHS responsibilities. A two-day course has been developed for supervisors and managers, a one-day course for employees and a half-day course for senior management. Training program content has been developed for all the courses although the managers/ supervisors' course is the priority at present, the program is planning on running the other courses as soon as possible.</p>

**Assessment of Actions Taken - Partially Met**

The Program realizes the importance and implications of the requirements of the CLC. The HRD and OHS Program have demonstrated a proactive approach that is strengthening the functional leadership for the OHS program. The program has acted to improve the leadership that it provides to the department by advocating for the creation of the OHS Policy Committee with senior management leadership, creating a OHS Directors Committee led by the Director General, HRD as well as the development and implementation of training initiatives.

Although there is still work to be done to address issues of uniform implementation of the program nationally, the OHS Chief is planning to institute monthly teleconference calls with regional OHS coordinators as well as to collect baseline OHS information from regions. This might prove to be a good opportunity to establish some minimum requirements for regional OHS programs in an effort to strengthen the uniformity of the program across all regions.

There remains work to be done however to further strengthen leadership issues related to the OHS program. The development of a national procedures manual has not moved ahead since the last follow-up. Although the program intends to have the Policy Committee discuss putting all OHS policies in a common manual, the HRD still needs to develop an OHS manual that will give regions a common guide for the implementation of their OHS responsibilities.

**Recommendation #1**

It is recommended that an OHS procedures manual be developed by the OHS Chief by Fall 2003 in order to provide regions with a common guide for the implementation of their OHS responsibilities.

**Management Response:**

We agree the OHS procedures manual should be done, and have already taken steps to ensure it is completed by October 2003. In the meantime, questions from the regional OHS coordinators are answered at the monthly conference calls.

**Resourcing**

January 2001 Area of Concern	Subsequent Actions
The importance of OHS needs to be acknowledged as OHS is a mandated requirement covered in the CLC Part II. Resources should reflect the mandated reality of the OHS program at EC and should be sufficient to adequately administer the program, from both a national and regional perspective. We recommend that the National OHS Coordinator investigate the need to define minimum resourcing requirements and to harmonize job	Additional resources have been allocated for the administration of the OHS Program at Headquarters. The OHS Chief position has been upgraded from an AS-05 to an AS-06 position to reflect the responsibilities of the position. Extra resources were made available for an additional Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to aid in the administration of the OHS Program from HQ. As a result there is an AS 03 position that has been staffed in the OHS program until March of



classifications for OHS coordinators as a means of providing assurance that the OHS program is operating as intended across all regions.	2004. Another position in Staff Relations also has 30% of their time devoted to OHS. And finally legal advisory services have been arranged through Consulting and Audit Canada (until end of September 2002). The specialist is a lawyer with an OHS background who concentrates on the legal aspects of OHS and deals with compensation issues.
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### **Assessment of Actions Taken - Partially Met**

The program has expressed concerns with the levels of resources for the national OHS position; this is because of the large amount of work for one person to accomplish with a limited budget. Within the last year, additional resources have been granted for the National OHS program for a temporary staff person to assist the OHS Chief and supplementary resources have been received to develop and implement a new training program.

The program contends that it is difficult to influence resourcing levels in the regions due to the decentralized nature of OHS at EC and the fact that it is the Regional Director General's who have the final say on resourcing in the regions. As a result, there is limited influence and direction coming from the National OHS program related to resourcing of the regional OHS function. Nonetheless, it is important for the National OHS program to investigate the need to define minimum resourcing requirements in regions in order to provide assurance that the OHS program is operating as intended across all regions.

With regards to the possibility of harmonizing job classifications for regional OHS coordinators, OHS at headquarters mentioned that as the functional lead they are planning on discussing with regions the possibility of developing competency profiles for OHS positions across the country. The development of competency profiles for regional OHS coordinators would provide a good basis for the establishment of harmonized classification and training requirements for OHS coordinators in all regions.

### **Recommendation #2**

It is recommended that the OHS Chief investigate the need to define minimum resourcing requirements for regions in order to provide assurance that the OHS program is operating as intended across all regions.

It is recommended that statements of qualifications be developed by the OHS Chief for regional OHS coordinators in order to encourage the establishment of harmonized classification and training requirements for OHS coordinators in all regions.

Such actions should be undertaken by Fall 2003.

### **Management Response:**

It is the responsibility of the RDG to look at appropriate level of resources, but as part of its functional role in Health and Safety and as part of the review of the Department HR capacity,

the Director General of Human Resources agrees to review and define the minimum resourcing levels across all regions, by Fall 2003.

A core OHS coordinator job description and classification has been developed. However as some regions combine other duties with OHS, a unique job description and job level will not be achieved for all jobs.

### **Performance Measures**

January 2001 Area of Concern	Subsequent Actions
There is little evidence of any measurement criteria having been established for the OHS program. There are no established standards to measure the performance and effectiveness of the OHS program either nationally or in the regions. As well, there are no evaluation mechanisms or management performance standards that have been established for the evaluation of managers' performance in relation to their OHS responsibilities. The establishing of concrete performance measures would greatly enhance the continued effectiveness of the OHS program. Without adequate evaluation processes in place for the program and for managers, it is difficult to ensure the integrity of the program and to maintain its continued effectiveness. The OHS program requires measurement criteria that are based on an accepted set of measures and that help to identify where resource and training needs lie, as well as assist in the identification of any impediments to the implementation of the program.	<p>No measurement criteria have been established to measure the performance and effectiveness of the OHS program.</p> <p>Some work has been undertaken in the regions for mechanisms to evaluate managers performance related to their OHS responsibilities.</p>

### **Assessment of Actions Taken - Not Met**

The program agrees with the need to establish baseline information about where the program is presently before it will be possible to measure or even develop indicators to measure the success of the OHS program. Once baseline information has been gathered, there is a plan to develop performance standards and to do some trend analysis for the program. The program has also cited a lack of internal capacity as an impediment to their ability to develop measurement and evaluation techniques to assess the performance of the OHS program. The program mentioned the possibility of periodically contracting an evaluation of the OHS program.

The OHS program has not succeeded in the inclusion of OHS accountabilities in management performance contracts because of a belief that performance contracts would become too cumbersome and lengthy. The training program that has been developed for managers will strengthen their accountability related to their OHS responsibilities, but the program needs to do more to ensure that managers are fulfilling their OHS accountabilities.

**Recommendation #3**

It is recommended that the OHS program develop measurement criteria based on an accepted set of measures that:

- help to monitor the programs operations;
- identify where resource and training needs lie; and,
- assist in the identification of any impediments to the implementation of the program.

Such actions should be undertaken by April 2004.

**Management Response:**

A report on accidents and incidents with a trend analysis will be presented to the OHS Policy Committee in January 2003. This will serve as the basis in a first step to determine where more efforts are required in the program.

We agree with the recommendation.

***Reporting***

January 2001 Area of Concern	Subsequent Actions
National reporting needs to be strengthened to provide senior management with an effective annual update on program performance and risks associated with the OHS program. The establishing of a more regular reporting process for the regions with reporting benchmarks would assist regional OHS coordinators with their reporting obligations and provide senior management with better information on which to base decisions on departmental needs and risks relating to OHS. We also recommend that the annual OHS report be tabled at the Management, Administration and Policy (MAP) Table.	Although no independent annual report for the OHS program for the past year was completed; OHS was covered in the annual Human Resources report. Such limited coverage may not suffice to strengthen national reporting for the OHS program.  As of yet, there have been no reporting benchmarks established for regional OHS coordinators to assist them in reporting to headquarters.

***Assessment of Actions Taken - Not Met***

There was no independent annual report this past year for the OHS program due to vacancies within the OHS Program. The program is planning an annual report this year and instead of presenting it to the MAP as recommended in the previous follow-up, it will be tabled at the OHS Policy Committee before being presented to the EMB.

Even though regions provide monthly information on accidents for the annual report to Human Resources Development Canada on accidents, no reporting benchmarks have been established for the regions to report to the OHS Chief. Nonetheless, the OHS Chief is planning on reviewing regional OHS reports and meeting minutes in order to establish some

basic requirements for regional OHS reporting and then discuss it at the National OHS Coordinator Conference in the fall.

#### **Recommendation #4**

It is recommended that the OHS Chief develop the annual OHS report to be an effective annual update for senior management that properly integrates regional OHS activities and provides an update on program performance and risks associated with the OHS program.

It is recommended that the OHS Chief establish reporting benchmarks for regional OHS activities so they can more effectively feed into the annual OHS report.

These activities should be undertaken by April 2003.

#### Management Response:

OHS is reported annually in the state of HR report, like any other Human Resources functions. This is the main report for the HR function and is presented to EMB, posted on the website and distributed to the unions. In addition a more detailed report will be provided to the OHS policy committee on an annual basis.

The OHS Chief has established reporting benchmark for regional OHS activities after consultation with the regional OHS coordinators in November 2002.

#### **Conclusion**

Improvements have been made to the leadership that is provided to the OHS Program through the creation of the OHS Policy Committee, the OHS Directors Committee as well as the development of training initiatives. As well, the HRD has been successful in obtaining additional resources to help with the administration of the OHS program, which will assist in its further development. However such resourcing has been limited in size, for a fixed duration and of a relatively junior level.

There remains work to be accomplished for the OHS Program. The program still needs to develop an OHS procedures manual as well as investigate the question of identifying minimum resourcing requirements for regions. The development of competency profiles will help to harmonize the classification and qualifications of regional OHS coordinators. Measurement criteria must be developed to assist in the monitoring of the program's operations and thus assist in the identification of any impediments to the implementation of the program. As well, reporting of OHS activities needs improvement. The OHS program needs to establish reporting benchmarks for regions to feed into the annual OHS report to be tabled at the OHS Policy Committee.

Because of the implications of the CLC and the important role the OHS program plays in protecting the health and safety of employees at EC and given the findings of this follow-up, it is recommended that another follow-up be conducted in two years to assess the actions taken to address the issues identified in this follow-up.

***Overall Management Response***

A significant improvement to the program has been made in the last year. We have established leadership by creating the OHS Directors Committee, by establishing monthly conference calls with regional OHS officers, and by having 4 meetings of the OHS Policy Committee. We are committed and have already started to improve our reporting and are putting in place reporting systems. Although resources are extremely scarce in the department we have been able to get one extra temporary resources to be devoted to OHS as well as funding for some OHS work by a consultant.