



Fact Sheet

Auditing and the OHS Accreditation Scheme

OFSC audits are conducted on companies seeking accreditation under the Australian Government Building and Construction OHS Accreditation Scheme (the Scheme), and on accredited companies to ensure they maintain the OHS standards required for accreditation.

There are a number of different types of audits conducted by the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner (OFSC). These include accreditation audits, conducted when a company seeks accreditation under the Scheme, and post accreditation audits, designed to ensure that accredited companies maintain the high standards of safety required for accreditation.

Accreditation standards are deliberately set at a high benchmark to ensure the safety of workers and their families.

How does the accreditation audit process work?

Accreditation is a two stage process—a desktop assessment followed by an onsite audit.

The desktop assessment is an examination of documentary evidence, and is designed to make sure a company is far enough advanced to warrant an onsite audit. During the desktop stage you may be contacted by the OFSC's Accreditation Team if they require additional information or evidence.

Once you have provided satisfactory documentation at the desktop stage, your company's claims are verified at an onsite audit. Onsite audits are detailed audits conducted by a Federal Safety Officer (FSO), usually over two days.

When progressing through the accreditation process, you should be aware the onsite audit may not directly align with the desktop assessment as it is a more detailed assessment of your company's OHS Management System and its implementation.

The criteria used to conduct the audit are available at fsc.gov.au.

What happens after my accreditation audit?

Following your audit, the FSO provides an audit report to the OFSC. The OFSC then reviews and quality assures the report before sending it to your company. You will also receive a letter to advise you of next steps.

It is important to note that more than one audit is often required to gain accreditation. Also, a successful audit doesn't automatically give a company accreditation.

Once a successful audit has been conducted, the results of the audit and desktop assessment processes are combined and presented to the Federal Safety Commissioner. It is the sole discretion of the Commissioner to grant accreditation, and companies are advised in writing of the Commissioner's decision.

What is a post accreditation audit?

Post accreditation audits are conducted by the OFSC on an ongoing basis to make sure companies maintain the standards required for accreditation.

Types of post accreditation audits include:

- Project Safety Audits (PSA)—conducted when an accredited company is awarded a contract for building work covered by the Scheme
- Maintenance Audits—conducted when an accredited company doesn't have any Scheme projects and has not been audited for at least six months
- Special Audits—conducted to monitor ongoing compliance with Scheme requirements. These may arise out of incidents, compliance action or any other issue that requires onsite examination.

This fact sheet is correct as of 7 May 2009. Produced by the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner.

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What can I expect from an audit?

All audits are arranged in consultation with the company being audited. As a first step, you will be contacted by an OFSC staff member to discuss a date and site for the audit.

The OFSC will organise for an FSO to conduct the audit, after which you will receive an audit notification letter together with the criteria being reviewed at the audit. You should review all the information provided by the OFSC in order to prepare for the audit. The OFSC also recommends that you communicate this information to the relevant staff working on the project site being audited.

Before the audit, the FSO will contact you to arrange the logistics of the audit, including a meeting time and location.

On the day of the audit, the FSO will first meet with you to discuss arrangements for conducting the audit. The audit will involve an onsite inspection as well as a system review at the site office, or in some cases at your head office location. The FSO will also speak to senior management representatives and site personnel.

Any documents taken by the FSO or reviewed on the day of the audit are handled as Commercial in Confidence and are not shared with any organisation other than the OFSC as part of the audit findings.

At the conclusion of the audit, the FSO will conduct a closing meeting where they will discuss the audit outcomes with you generally, and give you an indication of how you went. The level of specific non-conformances will not be discussed at this meeting as this will be finalised by the FSO when completing and providing the audit report to the OFSC. OFSC staff will then review the report for consistency before it is sent to the company.

Audit reports remain confidential, however an overview of your audit results is provided to the client where it is a Scheme project.

What does the OFSC require my company to do for an audit?

- You should ensure that your site will be active for the duration of your scheduled audit. If circumstances change for any reason, you should contact the OFSC immediately to discuss alternative arrangements.
- All system documents need to be readily available onsite and accessible to the FSO conducting the audit.

- Onsite company staff should not solely rely on the knowledge of external parties, such as consultants. It is expected that relevant company staff have a good understanding of the system.
- Senior management and subcontractors should be available for discussions during the audit.
- If you are going through the accreditation process, make sure that you make the OFSC aware of any impending tenders for Scheme projects as early as possible. This will allow the OFSC to prioritise your audit where possible.

What happens after an audit?

OFSC staff aim to process audit reports as soon as possible and generally have audit reports with the designated company representative within two weeks.

Where a corrective action (CAR) is raised as a result of an audit, the company is asked to provide documentary evidence of actions taken to address outstanding issues. See the OFSC Fact Sheet on CARs for more information.

The OFSC strongly encourages feedback and companies are provided with an evaluation form following each audit.

Alternatively, if you have any concerns about any aspect of your audit process you can contact your OFSC Audit contact officer or the FSC Assist Line on 1800 652 500.

Any information is treated strictly in confidence and will not impact on a company's accreditation application or status.

Other fact sheets in this series can be found at **fsc.gov.au**:

- Corrective actions and the auditing process
- Federal Safety Officers
- Powers of Federal Safety Officers
- Federal Safety Officer Code of Conduct

Also available:

- OFSC Audit Criteria

For further information you can:

- visit the FSC website at **fsc.gov.au**
- contact the FSC Assist Line on **1800 652 500**
- contact the OFSC via email at **ofsc@deewr.gov.au**