



Fact Sheet – Corrective actions and the auditing process

As part of the Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme, companies are required to undergo onsite audits to both become accredited and maintain accreditation. At any onsite audit, a corrective action (CAR) can be raised. This fact sheet outlines what constitutes a CAR, how companies should address them, and how they are reviewed by the OFSC.

What is a corrective action?

A CAR is a formal finding made by Federal Safety Officers (FSOs) during the auditing process to identify where companies need to take further action. An FSO raises a CAR when they determine that a certain aspect of the system being audited does not conform to the OFSC audit criteria. This assessment is based on their review of documentary evidence and observation of onsite activities.

What types of corrective actions are there?

There are two levels of CARs that can be raised as a result of Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner (OFSC) audits. These are major and minor non-conformances.

A major non-conformance is where there is the absence of a documented process, and/or the absence of implementation of a process where the opportunity for implementation has occurred in relation to a specific criterion.

A minor non-conformance is where there is a partially documented and implemented process where the opportunity for implementation has occurred in relation to a specific criterion.

How should corrective actions be addressed?

Companies are required to address all CARs by providing the OFSC with an action plan detailing the actions they will take to address any identified non-conformances. The action plan is required to include responsibilities for personnel and subsequent completion dates of the improvement actions to a company's WHSMS.

This information is generally required within 30 days of a company receiving their audit report and is requested in the letter accompanying the audit report. The audit report should provide sufficient detail to allow the company to understand the issue and the action required.

If you are unclear on any aspect of your report you should contact the OFSC Accreditation and Audit Team as soon as possible to clarify.

How are corrective actions closed out?

Companies are required to provide an action plan addressing any CARs, and in some circumstances the OFSC will request evidence to accompany the action plan. Once the OFSC receives an action plan from a company, it is reviewed to make sure that sufficient information has been provided, and that sufficient actions appear to have been taken to warrant onsite verification. The OFSC will write to you once this has occurred to let you know the next steps—generally a follow up audit.

These audits can be scheduled immediately or some months later depending on the number, level and severity of the CARs, and the availability of suitable sites for audit.

CARs are rarely closed based on paperwork alone; they are generally reviewed onsite, regardless of the level of action needed to be taken. This is so that the FSO can verify implementation on site.

What if I don't agree with a corrective action?

If after discussing findings with the FSO during the audit, you are still in disagreement with a CAR, you can contact your OFSC audit officer in the first instance. Where a corrective action clearly goes beyond the scope of the criteria or where there is sufficient information to warrant changing a finding, the Office will work with the FSO to ensure this occurs. Where this isn't the case, audit findings typically remain unchanged and the Office works to ensure the company has a full understanding of the criteria requirements and issues that have been raised.

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