



Fact Sheet – Federal Safety Officers (FSOs)

Who are FSOs?

Federal Safety Officers (FSOs) are consultants engaged by the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner (OFSC) to conduct audits under the Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme.

How are they selected?

FSOs are selected through a tender process run periodically by the OFSC. Tenders are assessed on a number of mandatory criteria including Registrar Accreditation Board Quality Society of Australasia (RABQSA) lead auditor certification and extensive building and construction industry experience. The Federal Safety Commissioner (FSC) also looks for personal qualities like excellent communication skills and the ability to build relationships and work collaboratively.

How are they engaged to the OFSC?

Once they have been selected through the tender process, FSOs undergo a two stage engagement process. Firstly, they are engaged as consultants to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and by way of a Deed of Standing Offer (as set out in the tender). Following this, they are appointed as FSOs by the FSC under a legislative instrument, giving them the legal authority to enter sites and conduct audits on behalf of the FSC.

What happens once they are engaged?

Before undertaking audits on behalf of the FSC, new FSOs are required to undergo an induction process, and are subject to an initial observation program. Initially, new FSOs only conduct post accreditation audits rather than accreditation audits, and these are observed by a member of the OFSC. The OFSC provides new FSOs with feedback based on these observations, and also reviews and provides any necessary feedback on their audit reports. Once the OFSC is satisfied new FSOs are conducting audits to the required standard, the FSOs can conduct accreditation audits.

How are they selected for individual audits?

FSOs are part of a panel arrangement and there are a number of factors that determine which FSO is selected to conduct any given audit. These include:

- Audit location
- Audit length
- FSO availability
- Type of audit (for example, if the audit is to follow up corrective actions, it's preferable to engage the same FSO who conducted the original audit)

What are their obligations?

All FSOs are required to abide by the General Directions to FSOs issued by the Federal Safety Commissioner. These Directions also refer to the FSO Code of Conduct, which outlines the behaviours that the FSC expects FSOs to uphold when conducting audits on behalf of the FSC. FSOs are also required to carry an ID card for formal identification purposes.

The FSC is keen to ensure that the audit process is conducted in a collaborative way. As such, FSOs are expected to be courteous, professional and helpful. The FSO conducting your audit should ensure you understand any issues that are detected and then explain what is required under OFSC accreditation.

It is important to be aware that FSOs are not meant as a substitute for a WHS manager or consultant. Companies being audited are expected to have a strong knowledge of their WHS system and processes, as well as the requirements of the Scheme.

How does the OFSC ensure FSOs meet their obligations?

All FSOs are periodically observed to ensure that the Scheme criteria are being applied consistently, and that FSOs are conducting audits in line with FSC requirements. All audit reports are reviewed by the OFSC to further ensure audit consistency.

FSO forums are held periodically and are an opportunity for FSOs to discuss issues, lessons learnt and positive experiences with the OFSC.

The OFSC also provides an audit feedback form to companies following all audits. This provides companies with an opportunity to comment on the audit process, including FSOs, so that the OFSC can continue to refine and improve its processes.

The FSC strongly encourages companies to speak to OFSC staff if there are any concerns about the audit process, including issues with consistency or the conduct of FSOs. Feedback is treated in confidence and will not impact on a company's audit results or accreditation status.

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

Do FSOs do anything other than auditing?

Yes.

Since the Scheme's inception in 2005, FSOs have contributed to the development of OFSC publications as well as the Scheme criteria and guidance materials, and have attended conferences and meetings to offer first hand insight into the process they follow during onsite audits. These additional activities are seen as a crucial part of the role of FSOs, and they enable the OFSC to draw on the technical expertise of FSOs beyond the auditing process.

How can I become an FSO?

People interested in becoming an FSO should check the OFSC website for details of upcoming FSO tenders, or call the FSC Assist Line to register their interest.

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

- Corrective actions and the auditing process
- Federal Safety Officer Code of Conduct
- Powers of Federal Safety Officers
- Safe Work Method Statements and the Scheme

Also available:

- OFSC Audit Criteria
- Audit Criteria Evidence Guide

For further information:

- Visit the FSC website at www.fsc.gov.au
- Contact the FSC Assist Line on **1800 652 500**
- Contact the OFSC via email at ofsc@dewr.gov.au

This fact sheet was last updated 16 January 2020. The Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner (OFSC) has prepared this fact sheet for general information only, and it does not replace professional advice. This fact sheet is derived from a variety of sources and has been prepared without taking into account your individual objectives, situations or needs. You should consider your personal circumstances, and if appropriate, seek independent legal, financial or other professional advice before acting. The OFSC has endeavoured to ensure the currency and completeness of the information in this fact sheet at the time of publication; however, this information may change over time. The OFSC expressly disclaims any liability caused, whether directly or indirectly, to any person in respect of any action taken on the basis of the content of this fact sheet.