World Health and Safety day 2023

Making OH&S standards accessible to small organizations

ISO/TC 283
Occupational health and safety management systems

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Making OH&S standards accessible to small organizations

The International Labour Organizations (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work includes all workers’ right to a safe and healthy working environment. **All workers**, not just workers who work for large organizations that have substantial resources, access to safety and health professionals and the support staff to document every aspect of an exemplary OH&S management system. **All workers**, even those workers who work for small organizations with limited resources, no access to health and safety professionals and limited ability to implement, maintain, and document an OH&S management system.

There are approximately 400 million small organizations around the world. -- 95 percent of organizations are classified as small or medium enterprises. These organizations employ 60 -70 percent of workers globally. They are huge contributors to the world economy. They contribute approximately 55 percent of economic activity in developed economies. Clearly the oversized role that small organizations play in the global economy and the number of workers they employ who are at risk of occupational fatalities, injuries and illnesses justify and, indeed mandate special attention by TC 283.

Small organizations have a desire and need to protect their workers because their workers are often family members and close friends. They are fully capable of understanding the key concepts associated to manage OH&S risks, including how to recognize and control the wide variety of hazards in their workplaces. They have the fundamental, common-sense know-how to protect their workers, but they don't identify with the language we often use. Management system standards use language that is common in corporate board rooms and executive suites but is rarely used on ‘main street’. Furthermore, the technical jargon often used in standards can be precise, but it is often not well understood by the small organization audience.

Small organizations are more likely to read our work if it is short, clear, and concise. The most precious resource for many small business owners is time. The small organization owners, often the most competent workers in their organization, spend much of the day pounding nails, painting, cooking in restaurants, operating equipment, and the myriad of other activities and services in the global economy. In their spare time they carry out other activities such as marketing and accounting. They send out invoices, pay bills, repair equipment, hire new employees, try to find ways to make ends meet, and improve their businesses. To make an impact, and ensure all workers have the right to a safe and healthy working environment, we must make it easier for small organizations to access the important developments and information happening as part of ISO 45001.

TC/283 website: committee.iso.org/home/tc283