

First Steps When Choosing an SMS

Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction (DoDI) 6055.01, *DoD Safety and Occupational Health (SOH) Program*, requires DoD organizations and units to implement SOH management systems addressing all management levels. SOH management systems go by many names; however, the most common term is safety management system (SMS).

An SMS is a performance-based approach for improving the management of SOH programs and processes. It focuses on continuous improvement, with strong support and involvement from leadership, management, and employees. In an SMS, the safety office serves as an advisor and technical expert for the organization, rather than the “safety doer” who executes the program. Worksites successfully implementing an SMS experience real, tangible benefits, such as:

- Reductions in work-related injuries and illnesses and lost time cases,
- Decreases in workers’ compensation (e.g., Federal Employee Compensation Act) costs, and
- Increases in productivity, quality, and employee morale.



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The first step towards transitioning to a performance-based system is to choose an SMS. Find out if your leadership or headquarters command requires a specific SMS. Some DoD Services and Agencies created their own SMS criteria (e.g., AFSMS¹, ASOHMS/CE-SOHMS²), while others follow more common nationally or internationally recognized SMS criteria (refer to the table below). If your overarching organization established an SMS preference, then follow that SMS implementation guidance.

Examples of SMS Models Adopted Within DoD

OSHA ¹ VPP ²	International Maritime Organization, ISM ³	ISO ⁷ 45001-OHSMS
OSHA Challenge	ANSI ⁴ /AIHA ⁵ Z10-2012, OHSMS ⁶	OHSAS ⁸ 18001

1 Occupational Safety and Health Administration
 2 Voluntary Protection Programs
 3 International Safety Management

4 American National Standards Institute
 5 American Industrial Hygiene Association
 6 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

7 International Organization for Standardization
 8 Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series

If your organization has the opportunity to choose which SMS criteria to implement, you can follow the steps on the next page to help select the SMS best suited for your organization.

¹ Air Force Safety Management System

² Army Safety and Occupational Health Management System/Corps of Engineers SOHMS

STEP 1: ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Think about your organization's goals for an SMS – what are you trying to accomplish? Each SMS has slightly different requirements, but all follow the same basic components: effective leadership and emphasis on safety and health from management; involvement in safety and health by worksite employees; identification and analysis of worksite hazards; prevention and control of identified hazards; and education through effective safety and health-related training. Do you simply want to have a basic SMS in place? Do you want to go beyond documentation and push employee involvement? Do you want to seek formal recognition from a third party? Knowing what you want to accomplish will help you choose the SMS best aligned with your organization's aspirations.

STEP 2: SMS REVIEW AND INVESTIGATION

Review the criteria and expectations for several SMSs and identify the one you think may benefit your organization. Become familiar with these SMSs by researching their websites and reaching out to other organizations who implemented the criteria. Most SMSs share the same overall principles, but there are differences in the criteria of each. Look at the criteria to ensure the sub-elements support your organizational goals.

STEP 3: LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT REVIEW & APPROVAL

Set up a meeting to discuss which SMS will work best for your organization. Invite leadership, management, and key players. Key players can be whomever you choose, and can include, but are not limited to the safety office, facility managers, industrial hygiene office, safety and health trainers, bargaining unit representatives, and supervisors from different work areas in your organization. Discuss the highlights and benefits of each SMS, why it would have a positive impact on the organization's safety and health programs and safety culture, and what resources you may need to get there. Be up front about the potential obstacles and concerns for implementing each set of criteria, including any anticipated additional resources. Evaluate how each SMS can help facilitate continuous safety and health improvement at your worksite.

Work with leadership to make a final decision on the SMS of choice to implement. Be prepared to answer any questions leadership may have before making a decision. Once the Commander makes the final decision, you can prepare to implement the SMS criteria.

STEP 4: SMS IMPLEMENTATION

Move forward with gathering all essential information. Assign a responsible person(s) to lead the implementation efforts and monitor progress. Consider creating a working group or committee to facilitate ideas, move forward with implementation, and assist in assessing progress. For more information on implementing your chosen SMS, see the SMCX one pager, "First Steps When Implementing an SMS" on the DoD SMCX website.

Now begin your journey!

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at:
<https://www.smcx.org/>.