



UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

**CEB**

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**Chief Executives Board  
for Coordination**

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**HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT (HLCM)**

Twenty-ninth Session, 19-20 March 2015

UNESCO Headquarters – Paris



**United Nations Common System**

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**Occupational Safety and Health  
(OSH) Framework**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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1. The UN system recognizes that the safety and health of its staff are of utmost importance, not only as a fundamental component of the employer's duty of care, but also to enable staff to accomplish their mandates and objectives. UN system organizations are therefore committed to protecting and promoting the safety and health of all staff, seeking to offer them a safe and healthy work environment where staff are protected from hazards and risks, work-related injuries and diseases. This Framework aims to build UN organizations' abilities to optimize staff safety and health, prevent staff harm, and to harmonize these efforts across the UN system.

## **PURPOSE**

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2. This Framework describes common principles for an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) management system that caters to the common interests of co-located UN system organizations, and facilitates the adoption of an OSH system across the UN Organizations.

## **RATIONALE**

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3. This Framework gives effect to:

3.1 The recommendations of the JIU report JIU/REP/2011/1; and

3.2 The request of the HLCM for developing OSH policy in the UN system (CEB/2010/HLCM/11, 2010).

4. The staff of the UN system are its greatest asset, and the UN has an absolute duty to prevent occupational accidents and diseases and protect the health and well-being of its staff. The UN's ability to deliver its mandate is inextricably linked to the occupational safety and health of its workforce and is part of an employer's duty of care.

5. This Framework is complementary to existing security and safety policies, but recognizes that staff also face safety and health hazards and risks that are not fully addressed through current UN safety and security policies.

6. A guiding system-wide OSH Framework is therefore needed to ensure harmonization between the individual organizational policies of various UN common system organizations and to prevent inconsistencies that might otherwise impede joint and cooperative actions, particularly in many of the operational environments at the country and field mission level. A system-wide shared Framework will allow country teams, field duty stations and shared offices to implement effective occupational safety and health systems across the UN system organizations.

7. This Framework is not intended to replace individual UN common system agencies' policies on occupational safety and health, but rather, seeks to define the minimum requirements for occupational safety and health programs at all UN organizations.

## **OSH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

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8. The OSH management system is a comprehensive system ensuring that the organization has effective tools for minimizing preventable staff harm, and for optimizing the occupational safety and health conditions and working environments of the United Nations system's workforce.

9. The core elements of an OSH management system are:

**9.1 Policy**

- a. A formal Occupational Safety and Health policy statement developed and endorsed by the Head of each UN system organization.
- b. Staff participation in the implementation of the OSH management system through a structure defined by the oversight body.

**9.2 Organizing**

- a. Organizational responsibility and accountability with an appropriately constituted safety and health oversight body.
- b. Necessary OSH competencies and training for all members of the organization, staff, managers, senior leadership, safety and health officers and other specialists as appropriate.
- c. OSH management system documentation of the performance according to the specifications of the organization.
- d. Appropriate internal and external communication to ensure OSH matters are received, documented and responded appropriately.
- e. Sufficient resources to implement the OSH management systems.

**9.3 Planning and implementation**

OSH risk management system

- i. Hazard prevention through identification and risk management plans
- ii. Safety and health risk management objectives and methodology
- iii. Standards of compliance
- iv. Information and data management tools, processes and protocols
- v. Emergency prevention, preparedness and response documented and communicated
- vi. An occupational health service with primarily preventive functions and the individual management of staff whose health is at risk or actually harmed by way of their employment in the organization

**9.4 Evaluation**

- a. Incident, accident and work related disorder and diseases reporting
- b. Incident, accident and work related disorder and diseases analysis
- c. Audit and management review

**9.5 Action for improvement**

- a. Preventive and corrective actions
- b. Continual improvement including policy objectives on prevention

10. The implementation of an OSH management system in an organization shall take place through:

- a. Appointment of an appropriately constituted safety and health oversight body, with senior management leadership, and representation from managers, staff, the medical service, the staff counselor and all other appropriate specialists;
- b. Definition of a structure within the organization to implement the OSH management system at all levels;
- c. Management of a risk register and risk management plan;
- d. Development, implementation and management of an incident/ accident and work related illness reporting system;
- e. Identification of appropriate standards with which compliance will be required;

- f. Implementation of a training regimen; and
- g. Ensuring access to occupational safety and health services appropriate to the needs of the staff and the office's operational environment.

11. When implementing an OSH system, the UN organization should ensure that core elements as set out in this Framework are included in field duty stations, country teams, etc. in conjunction with individual organizational policies.

## **OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PRINCIPLES**

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12. This Framework is underpinned by the following principles:

- a. Occupational safety and health is a line management responsibility and cannot be addressed by a health service operating in isolation from management action;
- b. Executive accountability for occupational safety and health is a core requirement of a functioning and effective system;
- c. Staff are also responsible for their own occupational safety and health; and
- d. Occupational safety and health interventions should be developed according to local conditions and priorities, informed by data (such as incident reports), and regularly reviewed for effectiveness.

## **GOVERNANCE**

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13. The Chief Executive Board is the owner of this Framework.

## **MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE**

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14. The implementation of this framework will be undertaken by all UN system organizations. On behalf of the Chief Executive Board, the High-Level Committee on Management shall monitor the implementation of with this Framework. All organizations in the United Nations Common System will provide an annual implementation update to the Chief Executive Board -- the first report shall be due to the CEB on 1 September 2016.

15. United Nations system organizations shall adjust relevant internal policies and procedures to facilitate harmonization and ease of its implementation in each organization including multi-organization environments.

## **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

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**Occupational health:** Aims at the development, promotion, and maintenance of workplace policies and programs that ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of staff.

**Occupational safety and health:** Identified as the discipline dealing with the prevention of work-related injuries and diseases as well as the protection and promotion of the health of workers. It aims at the improvement of working conditions and environment. Members of many different professions (e.g. engineers, physicians, hygienists, nurses) contribute to "occupational safety, occupational health, occupational hygiene and improvement of the working environment".

**OSH management system:** A set of interrelated or interacting elements to establish OSH policy and objectives, and to achieve those objectives.

**Risk assessment:** The process of evaluating the risks to safety and health arising from hazards at work.

**Continual improvement:** Iterative process of enhancing the OSH management system to achieve improvements in overall OSH performance.

## REFERENCES

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- International Labor Organization, ILO OSH 2001, Guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems, 2001
- International Labor Organization, OSH series # 72 Technical and ethical guidelines for workers health surveillance, 1998
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy in the UN System. Submission of the UN Medical Directors Working Group
- ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 164)
- ILO Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 171)



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## **Occupational Safety and Health Framework -Recommended phased implementation**

### *Phase 1 – Initiation*

**Recommended Target date for completion – 31 December 2015**

- Appointing an appropriately constituted health and safety oversight body, with senior management leadership, and representation from managers, staff, the medical service and the staff counselor;
- First Task of Organisational oversight bodies - development of an organisational policy that is compliant with the requirements of this directive.

### *Phase 2 – Risk management I – Risk mapping*

**Recommended target date for completion – 30 June 2016**

- Development and management of a risk register  
(consists of mapping risks from existing data sources (eg ABCC claims data, health service information, DSS data, DPKO occ health data).

### *Phase 3 – Risk management II – Risk assessment and mitigation*

**Recommended target date for completion – 31 December 2016**

- Rating of identified risks
- Prioritisation of identified risks
- Implementation of mitigations for highest priority risks (NB extreme risks should be subject to mitigation on an urgent basis, regardless of this target date).

### *Phase 4 – Incident reporting systems I*

**Recommended target date for completion – 30 June 2017**

- Development, implementation of an incident reporting system
- Severity assessment and analysis of incidents (according to priority);
- Feedback loop from reported incidents to Risk Register

### *Phase 5 – Standards and Compliance*

#### **Recommended target date for completion – 31 December 2017**

- Identification of appropriate standards with which compliance will be required; (e.g. external sources or development of internal standards)- with reference to risk registers, incident reports, local laws and regulations, international standards)
- Development of compliance methodology (e.g. self-reporting, compliance audit etc.)

### *Phase 6 – Capacity Building*

#### **Recommended target date for completion – 31 December 2018 (NB some training will need to be commenced well in advance, to underpin Phases 2 – 5. Phase 6 is about training for staff who are NOT in roles with core OSH responsibilities.**

- Implementation of a training regimen to embed OSH in line management functions – training to all supervisors in roles, responsibilities, and how to manage workplace OSH incidents.