Accreditation:
Delivering a safer world

Accreditation: Delivering a Safer World

What are the issues?

There are more than 2.78 million deaths per year as a result of occupational accidents or work-related diseases. Approximately 125 million people in the world are exposed to asbestos – in the workplace, resulting in an estimate of several thousand deaths from asbestos-related lung cancer each year. One in eight of total global deaths, around 7 million people annually died as a result of air pollution exposure, and there were 1.25 million recorded road traffic deaths globally in 2013[1]. There are also 374 million non-fatal work-related injuries and illnesses each year, many of these resulting in extended absences from work. Aside from the significant human cost, the economic impact of poor occupational safety and health practices is estimated to be 3.94% of global Gross Domestic Product (or about US$2.8 trillion, in direct and indirect costs of injuries and diseases) each year[2].

Recent problems with tainted food, drugs, electronic devices and other consumer products have made clear that more needs to be done to protect consumers. Injury statistics indicate that design problems, defects and inadequate safety information for consumer products are associated with many injuries.

In wider society, we expect that products we buy, from electrical goods to children's toys, our environment (water without contaminants, air free from harmful pollutants) or large-scale infrastructure projects (such as road, bridges, and public transportation systems) are safe to use. Our daily sources of energy, such as gas or electricity, should also be accessible without risk of injury or harm. Basic services such as drinking water and medical tests should be relied upon.

Businesses have a responsibility to ensure that their employees, visitors, and customers are able to enjoy freedom from injury or disease. They should also ensure that they provide for a sense of mental, physical and social wellbeing.

Health and Safety Regulation varies from country to country. In some economies, there are severe penalties for workplace accidents or breaches in policy. In other countries, economic development policies are of a higher strategic importance. Some businesses may feel that they face a challenge in balancing health and safety with operational needs, while others may feel pressured into focusing on profitability.

Providing a safe working environment should not be seen as a regulatory burden, but as a way to:
- reduce costs
- lower employee absence and turnover rates
- suffer fewer accidents
- lessen the threat of legal action
- protect reputation for corporate responsibility among investors and customers
- increase productivity through a healthier and better motivated workforce

What is the role of accreditation?

Completed projects, raw materials, products, services, management systems, and/or personnel can be evaluated against a standard, code of practice, or regulatory requirement by testing and calibration laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies (collectively known as conformity assessment bodies). Conformity assessment bodies are used to check that products and services are safe for use.

Accreditation is the independent evaluation of these conformity assessment bodies against recognised standards to carry out specific activities to ensure their integrity, impartiality and competence. Through the application of national and international standards, government departments, businesses and wider society can therefore have confidence in the calibration and test results, inspection reports and certifications provided. Accreditation bodies are established to ensure that conformity assessment bodies are subject to oversight by a competent body. Internationally recognised accreditation bodies, which have been evaluated by peers as competent, sign international arrangements that enhance the acceptance of products and services across borders, thereby creating a global infrastructure to support health and safety related processes.

These arrangements are managed by IAF, covering accreditation of certification bodies and verification/validation bodies, and ILAC, in the areas of testing, calibration and inspection body accreditation. This system ensures that the accreditations issued by different accreditation bodies is consistent across the globe. As a result, products and services tested, inspected or certified once under the IAF and ILAC umbrella, can be accepted everywhere with equal confidence.

What benefit does accreditation provide?

For Government & Regulators

The role of Government and Regulatory bodies is to ensure that businesses provide a safe working environment. They can set policy or technical requirements for products or services that are placed in the market, and rely on accredited conformity assessment bodies to verify compliance with those requirements.

Accreditation can be used to support health and safety policy in different ways. For example, markets can 'self-regulate' through businesses voluntarily agreeing to meet set standards. This can be applied where there is a need to reassure markets on the conduct of business while minimising risks, but where there is no desire by Government for regulatory intervention.

Alternatively, businesses that demonstrate compliance with standards through accreditation may earn 'recognition' from regulators, who trust them to comply with their legal obligations. This enables regulators to reduce oversight and inspection visits, saving tax payers money. This 'Earned recognition' can achieve the same or better outcomes as regulation, but on a voluntary basis. In this way, the cost of regulation is reduced for both the government and the regulated business.

International accreditation arrangements provide Regulators with a robust and credible framework to accept accredited test results, inspection reports and certifications from overseas, with an equivalent level of confidence as if they were carried out in the local economy.

Examples of how regulators are using accreditation to support their health and safety policy objectives can be found on Public Sector Assurance at **http://www.publicsectorassurance.org/topic-areas/health-safety/**

What benefit does accreditation provide? *continued*

For Government & Regulators

Case Studies:

Underpinning the competence of lifeguards in Dubai

Dubai has beaches, hotel pools, residential & sports complexes, and water parks that are under the supervision of thousands of lifeguards.

The Public Health & Safety Department of Dubai Municipality uses the accredited certification of lifeguards as a measure to create a safer experience for tourists. The scheme uses ISO 17024 and covers the certification of pool lifeguards, shallow water lifeguards and beach lifeguards.

The scheme assesses lifeguards for water rescue and basic first aid skills. After successfully completing examinations and certification requirements, the lifeguards receive a certificate and card from an accredited provider.

Czech Ministry of Regional Development requires certification of electronic tools users

Accredited certification is used by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic to assess the professional competence of those that use electronic tools or carry out operations using electronic equipment. Accredited certification is required through the public tender procurement process as per the rules and requirements stated in the Regulation No. 9/2011 Coll. Accreditation against the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 (product certification) is used for assessment of professional competence to ensure electronic tools are used competently and therefore, safely.

Ensuring the competence of Fire Risk Assessors

The responsibility to perform an assessment of fire risk, review such an assessment and to take fire safety measures, rests with duty holders. Both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service recommend that duty holders who wish to contract the services of external fire safety risk assessors, verify that the assessor is competent in fire risk assessment. One way of verifying the competence of an individual assessor is to select the assessor from a list of competent fire risk assessors maintained by a professional body or an accredited third-party certification body.

The safe management of asbestos in commercial property

The UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) introduced regulations to protect workers and the wider community from the risks of exposure to asbestos. Amongst other requirements, the Control of Asbestos Regulations require testing for the presence of asbestos to be carried out by a laboratory that is accredited against the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025, the international standard for testing laboratories.

HSE also recommends that, where surveys are carried out for the presence of asbestos, they should be carried out by inspection bodies that are accredited against the requirement of ISO/IEC 17020, the international standard for bodies performing inspection. HSE strongly recommends the use of an accredited surveyor to safely manage asbestos. The regulator recognises that accreditation provides clients with an assurance of a surveyor's competence. A review of the effectiveness of the Regulations concluded that:

– The Regulation minimised the risks from exposure to asbestos, keeping workers and the community safe. The review stated that the fall in exposures to asbestos between 1980 and 2015 will lead to 25,700 fewer deaths from mesothelioma and lung cancer in the 100 years between 2001 and 2100.

– Costs to business and government/taxpayers, as well as costs to the individuals affected, both in terms of financial costs and the impact of quality of life and loss of life, when applied to those estimates to the yearly profile of prevented cancer deaths between 2001 and 2100, the present value of the benefits to society of preventing those cases of cancer is estimated at £20.9 bn.

For Businesses

Businesses can demonstrate compliance with best practice by implementing a health and safety management system in order to:

- Improve reputation and increase opportunities to gain new business
- Minimise risks of downtime through accidents
- Demonstrate commitment with legal obligations
- Achieve potential cost savings from public liability insurance premiums
- Attract and retain staff

In a number of areas, it is a requirement to use accredited services before placing products on the market; in others it is a de facto 'licence' to trade as key purchasers expect it. Accreditation provides market differentiation and objective proof that products are safe and meet specification.

Accreditation is increasingly recognised in tender documents and for overseas trade. In some cases, it can result in reduced levies or audits.

Examples of how businesses are gaining tangible benefits from using standards and accreditation can be found on the Business Benefits website at **http://business-benefits.org**

Case Studies:

Accreditation reduces the need for regulatory audits and the associated costs

Accreditation of laboratories under the Drinking Water Testing Standard Scheme (DWTS) significantly reduces the burden of Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) audits, as the need for the Regulator to routinely audit or inspect the laboratory is removed. Conversely, if a laboratory chooses not to adopt DWTS, they will be subject to risk-based vertical audits, including audits of samplers by the DWI. The costs of DWI audits or inspections of laboratories used by water companies are recovered by the DWI, and so there are clear financial benefits of being accredited under the scheme.

BuildSafe Northern Ireland requires OHSAS 18001 in construction tenders

Contractors, consultants (and their supply chains) seeking to tender for public sector works contracts must be able to satisfy the Government Construction Client that they have the resources and competence to manage health and safety. Businesses with OHSAS 18001 accredited certification are therefore well placed to be eligible to tender for work.

ISO 45001 – Occupational health and safety

On 12th March, ISO published ISO 45001, Occupational health and safety management systems – *Requirements, that provides a framework for organisations to improve employee safety, reduce workplace risks and create better, safer working conditions.*

Accredited certification to this standard can help businesses improve its ability to respond to regulatory compliance issues, reduce disruption costs, and reduce the cost of insurance premiums.

Removing rogue taxi operators

All taxis in Sweden must be linked to a reporting centre to transfer data from each vehicle's taximeter equipment (wireless and digitally) to provide details of distances travelled. The Swedish Transport Agency, responsible for the registry of the accounting centres, has introduced this policy to reduce tax fraud and to remove the number of rogue taxi operators. In order to provide confidence in the system, the reporting centres must ensure that their equipment is certified by an accredited certification body.

Better loan and insurance rates offered to Japanese businesses managing risk

The Development Bank of Japan (DBJ) offers more attractive loan rates and discounted insurance premiums to commercial businesses that have taken steps to increase their resilience in case of emergency. The bank screens metrics around business continuity, preparedness, and mitigation and recognises that accredited certification of a business continuity management system to ISO 22301/22313 helps to manage risk exposure.

What benefit does accreditation provide?

For Employees

Working for a company that has implemented an occupational health and safety management standard sends a clear signal to employees and stakeholders that they view employees' health and safety as a priority within the organisation. It will identify risks and ensure a safe working environment.

Case Study:

Reduced workplace accidents result in insurance premium reductions for businesses in Italy

Italy's Workers' Compensation Authority, INAIL, the national governmental institute for insurance against accidents at work, has seen that organisations who hold accredited certification to the Health and Safety management systems standard, OHSAS 18001, have reduced workplace accidents by up to 40% in some sectors. As a result, INAIL offers businesses up to 28% discounts on the cost of insurance premiums for businesses with OHSAS 18001 accredited certification.

For Citizens

Public confidence can be gained from goods or services that are accompanied by an accredited certificate of conformity. International accreditation agreements ensure that such goods and services placed on the market, from which ever country of origin, meet standards of quality and safety.

Case Studies:

Certification improves safety levels of New Zealand adventure tourism

All adventure tourism operators throughout New Zealand require safety certification under the New Zealand Adventure Activities Certification Scheme. Providers need to undergo and pass a safety audit that certifies safety processes meet the safety audit standards.

Supporting protection from terrorism

The Department of Homeland Security's BioWatch Program provides early detection of a bioterrorism event and helps communities prepare a coordinated response. The combination of detection, rapid notification, and response planning helps federal, state, and local decision-makers take steps to save lives and mitigate damage.

The BioWatch Quality Assurance (QA) Program ensures that the BioWatch Program continues to provide actionable results with high confidence to local public health decision makers. The QA Program was established in 2011 to ensure field and laboratory operations are conducted according to program policies, protocols, and QA and quality control (QC) requirements to ensure the defensibility of results. Laboratories must be accredited to participate.

Ensuring the effective use of CCTV through accredited certification

The UK Government has introduced a surveillance camera code of practice that contains 12 guiding principles to ensure and demonstrate to communities that cameras are only ever used proportionately, transparently and effectively by the relevant authorities (police, police crime commissioners, local authorities and non-regular police forces). Accredited Third party certification enables organisations to clearly demonstrate that they comply with the surveillance camera code of practice. Certification indicates best practice and compliance with the code.

Improving product safety

A Europe-wide study conducted by the International Federation of Inspection Agencies (IFIA) revealed that nearly 80% of products tested bearing the CE-mark through self-declaration of conformity (SDoC) did not comply with EU regulations. The survey also found that 16% of products showed safety-critical failures, resulting in a high risk of shock or fire. This compares to less than 1% for products with third-party accredited certification. The report recommends that for sensitive and high-risk products, a more robust approach that relies on independent third party, on either a mandatory or voluntary basis, should be taken to ensure that products placed on the market are safe, compliant and sustainable.

Further information

Accreditation provides a globally-recognised tool to not only assess and control risks of the internal operation of businesses, but also the products and services that they place on the market. In this way, Regulators, purchasers and employees can demonstrate confidence that accreditation delivers a safer world.

Visit **http://www.publicsectorassurance.org/topic-areas/health-safety/** to access research, case studies and supporting information relating to the positive benefits of accreditation in the delivery of health and safety policy.

Visit **www.businessbenefits.org** for further examples of how businesses can benefit from standards and accreditation.

The ILAC Secretariat
Phone: +612 9736 8374
Email: ilac@nata.com.au
Website: www.ilac.org

@ILAC_Official

https://www.youtube.com/user/IAFandILAC

The IAF Secretariat
Phone: +1 (613) 454 8159
Email: iaf@iaf.nu
Website: www.iaf.nu

@IAF_Global

http://www.linkedin.com/company/international-accreditation-forum-inc

https://www.youtube.com/user/IAFandILAC