

Strategic

Summer 2014

Your Strategies for the Environment Newsletter



Where our minds tend to wander at this time of year...



...but try not to lose sight of your continual road to improvement!



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Auditing in the Summer

It's been a while since our Spring Newsletter, and I apologize – the new CASL legislation tied us up a little longer than expected. Coupled with an unusually busy work schedule (not complaining!), newsletters and blogs sometimes take a back seat to other tasks. It's also extremely difficult to write when it is just so beautiful outside! Actually, it's hard to get a lot of different types of work done in the summer – compliance audits spring to mind!

Why? Well, the sun is shining, the kids are out of school and you think how nice it would be to be able to take two months off work along with them! If you're lucky enough to do so (without jeopardizing your business, of course), congratulations! Most of us aren't that lucky – but whether or not you are, remember that summertime is still the season in which most people take their holiday time. This can make life difficult for those who work as auditors. Many things happen during the summer, potentially creating obstacles for an auditor, but the creative thinker will look at this time as an opportunity to identify improvement for a management system.

People will come up with many reasons against scheduling an audit during the warmer months...you have to take the excuses and turn them into opportunities that work for you. Here are a few examples:

1. "Too much of our staff is on vacation". Agreed, your facility is still open, the factory is operational, and product is going out the door – this means that people are working. And if people are working, then those people will have had to be assigned and trained. If they are performing a critical task, one that they may not normally perform, this would be a great opportunity to test how tasks are transitioned from worker to worker. Because if a certain task is not continuing as it should, according to your QMS, then this could be a great opportunity to discover the potential causes, and strive to improve the process.

2. "A student/temp is doing that job." That's great! The summer holidays is a fantastic time to expand your talent pool, take on interns or co-op students, build relationships that may one day become your permanent workforce. But people sometimes use students or temps as an excuse – "Oh, it's only a student, we expect quality and productivity will take a hit". Have they been given permission to send out lower quality product? Are you certain that they have

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been properly trained in all Health & Safety procedures that your team worked so diligently to define? Has someone given them permission to not recycle as per your EMS? Of course they haven't, which means that they, just like any other employee, can be observed and interviewed. Let your auditor know that they are students, or new to the job, and the thoughtful auditor will take that into consideration, and be considerate when conducting that interview. But that doesn't negate the fact that all new employees, permanent or temporary, need to be trained to do the task correctly, adhering completely to all safety and environmental guidelines. Student workers may sometimes tend to be a little less careful when it comes to observing safety rules as closely as would be desired – and full-time employees sometimes rush with that training, visions of holidays and barbeques dancing in their heads. Those not on holidays may see any extra care that they need to take as 'babysitting', and may not give it the attention it deserves, especially if it takes time away from their own, regular duties. If you are a company who takes on many students or temporary workers, it might be prudent to designate a team whose sole responsibility is the training and supervision of these workers (make sure that this team is well versed in all H&S rules and regulations, as well as your QMS and any other applicable standards).

3. "There is a lot of shut down work going on." Non-routine work, such as equipment overhauls and replacement during parts of the summer, is a typical activity that is not usually audited. But these are activities that have to be addressed in both Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems, through aspect and hazard identification. Have all the aspects and hazards of these non-routine activities been identified and controlled? Are all the chemicals identified and approved? Are hot work permits being issued, confined spaces controlled and equipment properly locked out? Are new wastes being handled correctly and spills controlled? Are contractors, which there are usually a lot of during these types of activities, properly controlled and trained?

There are many opportunities for a management system to be tested during the summer months – don't let anyone convince you otherwise. Summertime isn't an excuse for non-compliance, and may be the perfect time to show just how important being diligent to a QMS is, or to institute new guidelines or policy. Just remember to put on sun screen for any outside parts of the tour!



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