

SAFE ENTERPRISE

Occupational safety and health management system



The "Safe Enterprise" programme

The "Safe Enterprise" national programme was announced by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs together with the State Labour Inspection Office (hereinafter referred to as the "SLIO"), and since 1996 it has enabled implementation of a functioning occupational safety and health management system (hereinafter referred to as the "OSH") that complies not only with Czech regulations, but also with the requirements applied in the European Union to companies that decide to participate in the programme.

Currently, the most recognized documents in the field of OSH management systems implementation in European countries include the OSH Management System according to ISO 45001 (formerly OHSAS 18001) and the ILO-OSH 2001 Manual. The "Safe Enterprise" programme is based not only on these documents but also on the principles and rules applied by the Quality Management System (ISO 9001) and the Environmental Management System (ISO 14001) standards, and thus covers not only the requirements of the OSH regulations, but also the fields of occupational health, environmental protection and fire protection. The "Safe Enterprise" programme can make a significant contribution to the implementation of an integrated management system.

The programme is primarily intended for manufacturing companies with approximately 100 or more employees. The programme requires, among other things, that the activities being carried out present an increased level of risk to the life and health of persons and, where appropriate, to the environment.

How do we get the "Safe Enterprise" certificate?

A company considering participation in the "Safe Enterprise" national programme should first thoroughly review the Program Manual available on the SLIO's website www.suip.cz. This manual contains basic information about the programme, its terms and conditions, an introduction to the principles of an OSH management system and, finally, the recommended procedure for submission of an application for verification of compliance of the introduced OSH management system with the programme requirements. If there is any ambiguity, a presentation of the programme by the locally competent Regional Labour Inspectorate (hereinafter referred to as the "RLI") to senior management may be used.

The company's senior management is then expected to clearly state its intention and decision to participate in the programme. Creating the appropriate organizational, personnel, economic and material conditions also forms an essential part of this process. It is very important that the fulfilment of the conditions set out in the "Safe Enterprise" programme is not only a matter for persons professionally qualified to carry out risk prevention tasks, but that all senior employees at all levels of the company's management be committed to the cooperation.

After management's affirmative decision to join the programme, the company first prepares a so-called internal audit according to all control questions from the manual (the so-called programme checklist). If it is discovered that a certain part of the checklist is not put into practice or is not addressed, corrective actions must be adopted.

The checklist must be accompanied by an up-to-date and specific report on the OSH management system implementation in the company. This report shall clearly and briefly explain how and in what way the various control requirements have been fulfilled and in which specific internal company documents this information is embodied.

The "Safe Enterprise" programme also includes compliance with requirements relating to fire protection, protection of employee health and working conditions, and environmental protection. The company demonstrates compliance with these legal requirements by positive standpoints of the fire brigade, the Regional Hygiene Station or the District Mining Office. The standpoint of the Czech Environmental Inspectorate is provided by the SLIO only in cases where the company does not hold a certificate of an implemented environmental management system (ISO 14001 or EMAS).

Once all the programme requirements have been fulfilled, the report on the OSH management system implementation has been prepared, and the standpoints of the relevant state administration authorities are positive, the company may submit an application for verification of compliance of the introduced OSH management system with the programme requirements, together with a cover letter and any other documents specified in the manual, to the local competent RLI. The application, with all documents, shall be submitted in duplicate or electronically and it will be returned for supplementation if any discrepancies are discovered.

What can be expected during the OSH Management System audit?

The RLI will assemble a team of auditors having various specializations to carry out an on-site audit of the implemented OSH management system. In addition to reviewing documentation, the audit is especially focused on verifying compliance with the system requirements of the programme and reviewing the implementation of the documented procedures at workplaces. Employee responses regarding the operation of the system in practice also form an important source of information for the auditors.

If the conclusion of the RLI audit is positive and no unfulfilled requirements contained in the checklist or other serious deficiencies are discovered, the RLI shall notify the SLIO of this fact together with a recommendation to grant the "Safe Enterprise" certificate to the audited company. The subsequent issuance of the certificate includes, among other things, the signing of the Conditions for the "Safe Enterprise" Certificate Issuance, which the successful company undertakes to fulfil through its statutory representative when discussing the final report on the result of the verification of the compliance of the company's OSH management system with the programme requirements.

According to the established practice, the certificates are handed over annually on two dates, in May in Opava and in October in Prague. On this festive occasion, companies receive a certificate valid for three years in Czech and English versions, a glass plaque and the logo of the programme, which is registered as a trademark with the Industrial Property Office. The certificate holders will receive a proof that not only do they have an OSH management system in place in their documentation, but more importantly, that it works in practice.

The whole process, from introduction of the OSH management system, through obtaining the standpoints of all concerned state administration authorities, to the audit carried out by auditors, requires proper preparation and, above all, sufficient time on both the audited and auditing sides.

The RLI audit itself may take anywhere from a few days to several weeks, depending on the size and complexity of the relevant company. This is especially important to keep in mind when a company is nearing the end of its existing certification and is interested in the continuation of its “Safe Enterprise” programme. In the event of an issued certificate expiry, the company may not use the “Safe Enterprise” logo or label.

During the course of the audit or during the certificate validity period, a situation may arise where the company will no longer be able to comply with the programme conditions. These include namely a failure to remedy an identified noncompliance with the programme, conducting of a misdemeanour proceeding with the company based on identified breaches of legal regulations within the scope of the “Safe Enterprise” programme, or an overall failure of the OSH management system. In such cases, the RLI has the option to recommend that the SLIO not issue a certificate to the company, and it even has the option to propose an existing certificate revocation.

We have been certified as a “Safe Enterprise”, what´s next?

The OSH management system implementation and the subsequent certification of the company do not end the company's obligations in respect of the programme. In particular, the obligation to carry out an annual internal audit to verify that the system is still functional and continuously improving, and the annual sending of so-called improvement indicators to the locally competent RLI, together with a commentary and a completed accident report, should not be overlooked.

During the three years of the certificate's validity, the RLI carries out a continuous review, focusing primarily on changes in the company and in legislation, of the OSH management system at the company holding a valid certificate. The certificate expires after the three years, and the entire process, from the application with the specified documents and standpoints submission, to the audit carried out by auditors, is repeated if the company is interested.

Why participate in the "Safe Enterprise" programme?

A company that receives the "Safe Enterprise" certificate will get a transparent and functioning OSH management system leading to an improvement in the OSH level and a reduction in occupational accidents, for example, thanks to the introduction of records on near-misses, which could cause an accident (injury or emergency) in the workplace but fortunately do not happen. All the experience gained and documentation prepared may be used by the legal entity as a basis for implementation of an integrated management system.

Another indisputable advantage is that the company is audited by experienced auditors who can see what remains hidden to many people in the company due to operational blindness. In this way, the auditors not only check compliance with legislation but, more importantly, advise and recommend measures that will help the company improve its overall OSH situation.

The company will get all this, including the possibility to benefit from gratuitous basic RLI advice throughout the entire programme preparation and implementation process, without paying any fees.

Participation in the "Safe Enterprise" programme is entirely voluntary; however, a company that signs up to participate in the programme undertakes to fulfil the stipulated conditions. The awarded certificate significantly improves the holder's reputation, not only from the employee's viewpoint but also externally.

The above information is only basic; additional information may be obtained from the programme manual or by consulting the RLI.

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