



Lerwick Port Authority has rapidly achieved BSI certification to ISO 45001, making it a leader in health and safety

“ISO 45001 has placed health and safety at the heart of our organization, assisting with hazard identification and risk management, requiring continual improvement, exposing the business to external audit, and improving senior management and board oversight”

Stuart Wadley,
Health, Safety, Environment and Quality (HSEQ) Manager, Lerwick Port Authority

At a glance

Lerwick Harbour is the principal commercial port for the Shetland Islands. With modern, versatile facilities, it forms a key component in the Islands’ economy. Lerwick Port Authority is a Trust Port with statutory responsibilities to manage, maintain and regulate the harbour. In 2018, the Authority achieved BSI certification to ISO 45001 – the best practice framework for an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system – demonstrating its commitment to health and safety and strengthening the confidence of employees, port users and other stakeholders in its professionalism.

Certification benefits

- Consistent, robust processes for managing occupational health and safety
- Improved employee awareness and engagement
- A culture of continuous improvement
- Potentially fewer accidents and illnesses
- Reassurance to employees, harbour users and stakeholders
- Rigorous approach to regulatory compliance
- Competitive differentiation and advantage
- Enhanced organizational resilience and reputation

Business background

Lerwick Harbour is the most northerly commercial harbour in the UK. The sheltered, deep-water port operates around the clock in all weather conditions, handling over 5,000 vessels annually. With more than 50 staff and turnover of over £10m a year, Lerwick Port Authority maintains and develops an extensive port estate, providing harbour facilities for the varied shipping in Shetland, from yachts and pleasure boats to ferries, fishing trawlers, cargo vessels and cruise liners.

Why certification?

The health and safety of its employees and harbour users is a priority for the Authority. As Stuart Wadley, Health, Safety, Environment & Quality (HSEQ) Manager, explains, "Health and safety awareness is embedded into our way of working, and through engagement – listening and recognizing when action is required – we focus on doing the right things for the right reasons."

Wadley continues, "We already have BSI certification to the quality and environmental management standards ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. Following an extensive overhaul of our OH&S system there was a desire from the board to complete the tripartite of new standards, because adding ISO 45001 would demonstrate our commitment to OH&S and give customers and stakeholders confidence in the Authority."

He adds, "There was also a realization that most of the actions needed to achieve ISO 45001 were legislative, regulatory or moral requirements, so would have been carried out regardless of the standard – and this made it a logical step to go for certification, which required a systematic approach."

ISO 45001: a game-changer

Published in March 2018, ISO 45001 is the first global OH&S management system. Like its British Standard predecessor, the long-established BS OHSAS 18001, ISO 45001 lays out all the requirements for creating a successful OH&S management system, underpinning a safe and healthy workplace and compliance with the law, and enabling organizations to develop a robust system to identify hazards, assess risks and take appropriate mitigating measures.

The new standard places particular emphasis on risk-based thinking – requiring management to integrate OH&S policy with organizational strategy – and on the key themes of leadership, worker engagement and consultation. Stephen Griffiths, BSI's EMEA Product Champion for OH&S, describes it as "a game-changer" for businesses. "Whether transitioning

Certification: ISO 45001

from OHSAS 18001 or applying for the first time, ISO 45001 offers huge benefits by helping to provide a safe and healthy workplace, reducing work-related injury and ill-health, and enhancing organizational resilience," he says.

Leadership commitment

When Lerwick Port Authority's certification journey began, in March 2018, senior management was behind it from the start – a vital factor in light of the standard's requirement for leadership commitment to creating a strong health and safety culture.

"Top management already had a good understanding of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, and going for ISO 45001 was seen as an extension of that process," says Wadley. "The HSEQ team also provided them with information, clearly explaining that there was a strong emphasis on their need to fully engage with the standard. We have a very supportive leadership team so this was already the norm."

With senior management backing, the Authority found implementation straightforward, based on internal assessment of existing processes against the requirements of ISO 45001, followed by BSI assessment.

Like many organizations holding multiple standards, it benefits from ISO 45001's shared 'high level structure' with ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, which means the standards adopt consistent terms, headings and format, making it quicker and easier to manage all three. "We already had a framework in place from our other standards, so it was just a case of integrating the OH&S system into the overall management system," says Wadley.

"Our main challenge lay in fully understanding what the standard required. My assistant and I dedicated a significant amount of time to this, reading online articles and joining webinars. We then made small changes to our practices and additions to our documentation to ensure compliance."

Improved engagement

ISO 45001 looks at the issue of engagement in terms of organizational behaviour and company culture, and at the effectiveness of internal communication, which is measured to see if key OH&S messages are getting across. It has led the Authority to ensure it has a systematic process for consultation and participation with workers, "in particular via departmental meetings, but also through staff information notices, comment sheets, and face-to-face discussions," says Wadley. "All personnel are encouraged to provide feedback whenever they have something to share."

He adds, "Consultation and participation have always been part of the way we work, but there was positive feedback from staff that this process has been formalized, creating more willingness to come forward unprompted with suggestions."

BSI's role

Wadley says the Authority had "no hesitation" in using BSI as its certification partner. "BSI provides a very client-focused service, taking time to get to know our business inside out, ensuring that our certification really is a true reflection of what we do. Our experience of BSI had always been excellent, and this was maintained by our BSI assessor for ISO 45001, who always added value by providing useful feedback."

"Our longstanding relationship with BSI provides us with continuity of awarding body, with auditors, sales and support teams who have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of our business," he says. "And we get ongoing reputational benefits from our association with BSI's respected brand."

Long-term benefits

While it is still early to weigh up all the benefits of ISO 45001, Wadley says achieving certification in under nine months "demonstrates our commitment to health and safety in the workplace to our customers and stakeholders, and that we are meeting the requirements of our port users, particularly within the offshore oil and gas industry."

He continues, "Certainly, the enhanced system is aiding us with legal and regulatory compliance. It has placed OH&S at the heart of the organization, assisting with hazard identification and risk management, requiring continual improvement, exposing the business to external audit, and improving senior management and board oversight."

Looking to the future, Lerwick Port Authority sees BSI certification to ISO 45001 as an investment that will help sustain it for coming generations. "We're confident it will differentiate us from competitor ports, strengthen our resilience, and enhance our reputation," concludes Wadley.

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