

Review

You must use a system to regularly check that your safety systems are:

- The best they can be.
- Helping you achieve your safety goals and objectives.
- Captured accurately in your safety management documentation.
- Aligned with sector good practice and legal requirements.
- Being implemented in the field – your team are ‘walking the safety talk’.



Someone must have responsibility to ensure that reviews take place and any resulting actions are followed up.

In-house reviews

You should plan time for the in-house review of your SMS and your activities.

SMS

Your safety system review should, over time, cover all aspects of your SMS and include checking:

- Your systems against external measures such as activity safety guidelines, audit standards, and current legislation requirements.
- Your risk assessments, SOPs, forms and other safety tools. Are they correct, useful, and being used as intended?
- Your staff on the job. Are they following agreed procedures and, if not, why not?
- That safety lessons are communicated to, and implemented by, staff.
- That learnings from previous reviews, feedback from Technical Advisors and others have been implemented.
- That the SMS still works when things change – including key staff, hazards, incidents, new or changed activities, and legal requirements.

Activities

As well as the overall components of your SMS, you should regularly check the safety aspects of each of your activities. Consider:

- Reviewing all aspects of the activity – risk assessments, SOPs and other tools, the actual running of the activity, participant information and briefing, staffing matters (competence, qualifications, supervision levels) and the equipment used.
- All aspects of your rescue and emergency preparedness, including serious emergency situations, eg: do our emergency plans include how to respond late in the day when we have a serious medical event with a big storm coming in?

- Who should lead the review – the perspective of experienced staff is valuable.
- Involving an external expert (a Technical Advisor) who will bring knowledge of good practice and alternative ways of doing things. This is particularly important for owner-operator businesses and other small businesses.
- Using a peer – maybe a reciprocal arrangement with another provider.



A strong safety culture will support these processes, but also encourage and address safety feedback from other sources eg. safety concerns or complaints.

External reviews

External reviews range from regulatory and voluntary audits, to using an external safety advisor to review a part of your SMS.



External audits are mandatory for activities subject to the [Adventure Activities Regulations](#), but it's good practice to have an external safety audit even if you're not legally required to do so.

To get maximum value out of an audit:

- Organise it well in advance and for a time that suits your operation. You'll get more useful feedback if the audit occurs during a busy normal operation, rather than with a mock or controlled situation.
- Select an audit provider that suits your needs and your operation.
- Contact your auditor early to ensure that you both have all the information you need, including their audit criteria.
- Know the audit standard that you'll be checked against and use it to do your own internal check before the audit.
- Know the key areas where you would value advice and ensure you draw on your auditor's experience to get the answers you need.
- Ensure that as many of your team are onsite as possible, especially key staff.
- Allow time for required follow-up actions and audit completion.

Incidents and emergencies

These provide excellent opportunities to review how well your SMS is supporting your operation, and to learn and improve for the future. See [Incident Reporting](#).

Documenting reviews

It's important to record reviews, and include details about:

- What was checked, when, and who was involved.
- How the checking occurred and against what measures, eg by observing staff running an activity or by reviewing checklists and forms.
- Follow up, and subsequent action planning and close out.

"We have a rolling roster for checking our systems. Every three months two of our team check our systems, eg is the guide training up to date? Is the crisis plan accurate? Are the first-aid kits sealed and in the right place? It's done on a weather day and helps to keep all of our staff involved with the running of the place..."