

# **Partnerships' On-Site Audit Review (OSAR) Project**

## **What is the On-Site Audit Review (OSAR) Process?**

OSAR is a research project designed to evaluate the work of certified auditors who conduct audits for employers seeking a Certificate of Recognition (COR). The OSAR process is an independent review of audit findings. On-site reviewers will visit selected employer work sites and gather information which will then be compared to the findings in the original auditor's report. The on-site review will focus on key aspects of the auditor's process and is not intended to be a complete re-audit of the employer.

## **Why is the OSAR Project being conducted?**

Partnerships in Injury Reduction (Partnerships) first began work on the design of the OSAR Project in 2008. The work looked at whether an on-site review process was needed to supplement the existing quality assurance review process conducted by Certifying Partners. Feedback from stakeholders – including Certifying Partners and Industry Associations – helped to shape the project's scope.

More recently, the Auditor General's identified the lack of on-site validation of audit results as an area of concern. The resulting report acknowledged the department's efforts to address this issue.

The project will also consider the effectiveness of the project's proposed evaluation tool, and will determine if conducting a limited review of key factors is sufficient to test the validity of the audit reports.

## **What are the timelines for the project?**

The OSAR Project began in the spring of 2010 and will continue into early 2011. A final report of the project's finding will be completed by March 31, 2011.

## **What kind and how many audits will be reviewed?**

The OSAR Project will conduct reviews of 120 regular certification audits.

## **How long will the on-site audit review take?**

Each OSAR should take no more than one day on site, and will be scheduled by appointment. The OSAR Project is designed as a limited review both to minimize disruption to the employer's business and to avoid the costs of a complete re-audit.

## **What will be examined by OSAR?**

OSAR Auditors will focus on the following key questions:

- Were interviews conducted on a representative sample of the employer's workforce?
- Were site observations performed at all sites identified in the audit report?
- Did the auditor complete all critical audit steps?
- Does the direct feedback from management and workers validate the original auditor's findings?

- Does a review of key documentation (including job task inventories, and hazard assessment and control measures) validate the original auditor's findings?
- Do observations confirm that hazard controls documented by the original auditor are actually in-place?

### **Who will conduct OSAR Audits?**

The reviews will be conducted by five qualified health and safety auditors working directly under contract to Alberta Employment and Immigration. The auditors were selected from a pool of candidates nominated by participating Certifying Partners. The successful candidates were selected based on their qualifications, current auditor certification, auditing experience, industry experience and suitability for the role.

The five individuals chosen as OSAR auditors have a combined total of more than 40 years of COR auditing experience and 90 years of direct health and safety experience. All conduct employer and/or auditor training for their respective Certifying Partners.

### **Which Certifying Partners are participating in the OSAR Project?**

The following Certifying Partners were selected to participate in the Project.

- Alberta Association for Safety Partnerships (AASP)
- Alberta Construction Safety Association (ACSA)
- Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA)
- Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA)
- Alberta Safety Council (ASC)
- Enform
- Manufacturers' Health and Safety Association (MHSA)

### **What steps will be taken to ensure OSAR findings will be kept confidential?**

Each OSAR Auditor has signed a contract with Employment and Immigration which outlines their responsibilities to maintain the confidentiality and security of all information gathered in the performance of their duties. All participants have also satisfactorily completed the Government of Alberta Contractor Privacy/Security Readiness Self Assessment.

### **As an employer, do I have to participate if I have been selected?**

By participating in the OSAR Project, employers will have the opportunity to be part of an important research project designed to introduce improvements to the audit quality assurance process.

While Partnerships encourages those employers selected to participate, it is not a mandatory requirement. Should any employer decline to participate, they will be asked to provide their reasons, and their responses will be considered as part of the overall data collected by the OSAR Project.

### **How will I know if my audit has been selected for OSAR?**

Some Certifying Partners have offered to be the initial contact with their membership, both to introduce the OSAR Project and to confirm the employer's participation. In other cases, employers will receive a letter directly from Partnerships.

Following the initial notification, participating employers will be contacted by the OSAR Auditor who will schedule a day with the employer to conduct the review.

### **Will the OSAR Auditor see a copy of my audit report before they start their review?**

No. The OSAR Auditor will not see the original audit report until after they have completed their on-site review. This will ensure that the OSAR auditor will draw their own independent conclusions.

### **What if an OSAR Auditor observes a situation of imminent danger?**

OSAR auditors are health and safety professionals, and have an obligation to advise the employer should they observe situations of imminent danger to employees.

### **As a participating employer, will I receive feedback about my health and safety management system from the OSAR Auditor**

No. The OSAR Auditor's role is to evaluate the work of the original auditor.

### **As a participating employer, could I lose my COR as a result of OSAR?**

No. OSAR is not a complete re-audit of the employer's system, therefore OSAR results will not jeopardize an employer's COR status.

If, however, the review identifies a situation where the original auditor overlooked very serious deficiencies and the employer's health and safety system is compromised, then these issues must be addressed and the OSAR Auditor will advise Partnerships. Both the Certifying Partner and Partnerships will then work with the employer to develop a fair and reasonable action plan to remedy the identified deficiencies.

### **I am an auditor – could the OSAR findings affect me?**

OSAR is intended as a research project, and looks for trends that will tell us if an on-site quality assurance process needs to be introduced. However, if very serious errors or omissions by the original auditor are identified, the auditor's Certifying Partner will be advised and may decide to pursue the matter with the auditor.

### **Where do I get more information about OSAR?**

- Your Certifying Partner
- Partnerships in Injury Reduction at (780) 427-8842
- Partnerships Website:  
<http://www.employment.alberta.ca/SFW/277.html>