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## Ensure worker safety with an OHSAS 18001 certificate

- continual improvement    → internationally recognized standard
- **benefits**    → taking responsibility
- complete health and safety management system based on the plan-do-check-act cycle



When procuring goods and/or services, you want to be sure that your contractors or other service providers and suppliers ensure their employees' safety. One way to be sure is to ask companies if they have a safety certificate. Although the OHSAS 18001 certificate is currently less well known than the Netherlands' 'VCA' (safety checklist for contractors) certificate, more and more companies are choosing OHSAS 18001. This brochure explains what OHSAS 18001 is, why companies choose OHSAS 18001 and the benefits OHSAS 18001 offers for the ordering parties.

## WHAT IS OHSAS 18001?

The Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series or OHSAS 18001 is a standard for occupational health and safety management systems used around the world. In 2016, the OHSAS 18001 standard will be replaced by ISO 45001 (currently under development). An OHSAS 18001 certified organization seeks to:

- prevent work-related incidents, illness and accidents;
- comply with applicable OHS legislation and regulations;
- continually improve its OHS performance, using the Deming circle (also called the ‘plan-do-check-act’ cycle).

The organization first identifies and evaluates its OHS hazards and risks, at both the company level and per project. It takes technical and organizational measures to at least control these hazards and risks, and wherever possible, to minimize or even eliminate them. An organization monitors its own adherence to these principles. The certification process evaluates whether the organization actually carries this out in practice.

RUTGES VERNIEUWT, ROBERT-JAN DE BRUIN:

“OHSAS 18001 creates a healthy trust around safety and health!”

ENECO, ALAN VAN BALLEGOOIJEN:

“OHSAS makes it possible to enter into a dialogue about safety performance.”

The structure of OHSAS 18001 is similar to that of the ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 standards (for quality management systems and environmental management systems, respectively). An OHS management system compliant to OHSAS 18001 consists of the following elements.

ELEMENT	BRIEF DESCRIPTION (SEE THE STANDARD FOR A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION)
Principles of OHS policy	The management states that at a minimum, it is compliant with legal/regulatory OHS requirements, and that it is committed to continually improving its OHS performance (such as number of work-related incidents). Principles for objectives and for acceptance of risks are laid down.
Identification of hazards and risks and legal requirements	All hazards and their associated risks are identified, analyzed and kept up to date using a risk matrix, along with the associated legal and other requirements (such as covenants).
Objectives and planning	Objectives are formulated and plans are made for controlling the identified risks. Measures to keep the risks within acceptable limits are determined.
Implementation and operation	Competences necessary for personnel, and the training necessary, are determined. Responsibilities are assigned. Where necessary, procedures and operational instructions are drawn up and lines of communication established.
Monitoring en internal audits	The way in which the objectives are to be achieved is laid down. If necessary, corrective measures are taken. Internal audits are conducted to determine whether the system is functioning properly. The organization itself evaluates its compliance with OHS legislation and regulations.
Management review	Top management determines if the management system is functioning properly and if the objectives are being met. Measures are taken to steer the process if necessary. Objectives are modified in the light of the organization's commitment to continual improvement.

## WHAT OHSAS 18001 CERTIFICATION MEANS

If a company is OHSAS 18001-certified, it means that a certification body has evaluated whether all the elements of its management system have been implemented, whether they satisfy the OHSAS 18001 standard and whether they function in practice. Spot checks and interviews on the work floor are part of the certification process. After three years the entire system is re-evaluated, and annual audits (periodic audits) are done in the two intervening years.

The Netherlands has eight certification bodies, accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation to issue OHSAS 18001 certificates (as of 17 December 2014). A certification body is accredited for a particular sector (or sectors). The certification body must be able to demonstrate that its auditors are familiar with the issues in a given sector.

## WHY ARE COMPANIES CHOOSING 18001?

Companies choose OHSAS 18001 primarily because they themselves are aiming to improve and better control their OHS performance. The following benefits are commonly mentioned:

- OHSAS 18001 is a complete management system, based on the 'plan-do-check-act' cycle.
- OHSAS 18001 takes all OHS risks into account (including psychosocial working conditions).
- OHSAS 18001 looks at all your employees, from those in operations (and most at risk for accidents) to those in office positions.
- Certification is focused on evaluating and managing the identified risks, not just ticking boxes on a list of required measures or records.
- OHSAS 18001 is an internationally recognized standard.

Some companies in the Netherlands have an OHSAS 18001 certificate instead of the VCA (safety checklist for contractors) certificate.

We have a separate publication (in Dutch) comparing OHSAS 18001 and VCA, which can be downloaded here:  
[www.sccm.nl](http://www.sccm.nl) > Arbo OHSAS 18001 > OHSAS 18001 vs VCA.

## WHO HAS THE OHSAS 18001 CERTIFICATE?

In the Netherlands, 380 organizations have an OHSAS 18001 certificate (as of 17 December 2014). These organizations have a total of about 1,500 sites. The number of OHSAS 18001 certified organizations is growing by about 15% a year.

## NUMBER OF OHSAS 18001 CERTIFICATES PER SECTOR (AS OF 17 DECEMBER 2014):

Construction	43
Electronic and optical equipment	39
Business services	44
Transport and storage	36
Metals	28
Chemicals	28
Other sectors	162

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## HOW IS EMPLOYEE TRAINING REGULATED IN OHSAS 18001?

OHSAS 18001 certified organizations must determine whether OHS training is necessary, and if so what training is necessary, for all staff positions in order to ensure that all of their employees are working safely, and to minimize the identified hazards/risks. The organization itself determines the details of this training. Many OHSAS 18001 certified organizations make use of the courses and personal certificates in accordance with VCA.

## WHICH ORDERING PARTIES ACCEPT OHSAS 18001 AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO VCA

In the Netherlands, more and more large companies are convinced of the value of the OHSAS 18001 certificate, and their procurement policies accept both the VCA\*\* and OHSAS 18001 certificates. Eneco, Essent and Shell Nederland are examples of companies that accept OHSAS 18001.

## WHAT DO THESE ORDERING PARTIES THINK OF OHSAS 18001?

These companies work with OHSAS 18001 certified contractors because:

- OHSAS 18001 certified companies take responsibility for their own safety issues.
- these companies have a culture of improvement.
- they have a high awareness of their own risks and hazards.
- certification enables them to make international tenders.

## GOVERNMENT INSPECTORATE VALUES OHSAS 18001

The Netherlands Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment Inspectorate inspects organizations with an OHSAS 18001 certificate less frequently (except for companies carrying a risk of explosions and thereby regulated by the Netherlands' 'Seveso' directive).

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ESSENT, RON WAUMANS:

“Our HSE policy is aimed at working with companies who know not only how to obey all the safety rules in practice, but also are able to genuinely perpetuate a company philosophy of a mature culture of safety.”

SHELL NEDERLAND,  
ANNEMARIE VAN DER REST:

“The elements of the OHSAS system correspond well with our own HSSE management system. Any company, whether large or small, can integrate OHSAS into their own system.”

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## SCCM PROVIDES INFORMATION ABOUT OHSAS 18001

SCCM is owner of the certification scheme for OHSAS 18001.

In other words, SCCM draws up the rules for certification together with all stakeholders. SCCM aims to give the OHSAS 18001 certificate added value for all stakeholders. More information can be found at [www.sccm.nl](http://www.sccm.nl), including:

- a database of all companies with an OHSAS 18001 certificate;
- the certification scheme, with all the requirements a company needs to meet in order to be certified;
- informational publications with examples of companies and tips for implementing a management system;
- results of research, including on the added value of OHSAS 18001.

If you have any questions about OHSAS 18001 or SCCM, please send an e-mail to us at [info@sccm.nl](mailto:info@sccm.nl).

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