



The Ultimate Guide to
**Audit and
Inspection
Programs**



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When was the last time you took a long, honest look at your environment, health, and safety program? If it’s been a while, or you can’t remember—or if you’ve never conducted a safety inspection or audit before—it’s time to get to work. By evaluating your facilities, people, and processes, you’ll make your workplace a whole lot safer and more efficient.

You’ll also minimize your regulatory and legal risks. Audits and inspections ensure you stay 10 steps ahead of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the other federal and state authorities just waiting to hit you with citations and penalties.

If you find the prospect of audits and inspections overwhelming, you’re not alone. After all, there’s a reason organizations don’t conduct them as often as they should. So let’s make this as simple and painless as possible by breaking audits and inspections down into manageable pieces.

The Four Keys to a Solid Audit and Inspection Program

These are the four basic components that, when combined, form a comprehensive assessment of your EHS program

The Regulatory Audit

Initial checks for issues that would likely result in injuries and penalties if not addressed.

Accident Investigation

Everything the organization does following a workforce health or safety incident.



The Facility Inspection

Assessments of the organization's physical premises, teams, and workforce behaviors.

Safety Committee Meetings

The group of decision-makers who meet regularly to discuss audit and inspection findings and make necessary safety program changes.

In the following pages, we'll explore how these pieces fit together, and how to optimize each element of your audit and inspection practices. You'll learn how to control audit and inspection costs while ensuring you're harnessing every opportunity to protect your workforce and bottom line. But first, let's review some safety audit and inspection basics.





First things first, What Is a Safety Audit?

An audit is a systematic review of something. It's a sweeping, rigorous, and sometimes-painful process meant to verify that what's supposed to be happening is happening—or that what was claimed to have happened did actually happen.

Audits are typically conducted by independent entities rather than the person or organization undergoing the audit. In other words, you can't audit yourself. You may not know what to look for, and even if you did, you couldn't be objective about it.

Consider an Internal Revenue Service audit, for instance. When someone gets audited by the IRS, a government agent combs through that person's financial records to check for errors and missing information and to determine if the individual filed their taxes correctly. The taxpayer couldn't do this themselves, as a) they're probably not an accounting expert and b) they would have an incentive to overlook errors and misrepresent their finances.

Most people dread the possibility of an IRS audit, but they have nothing to fear if they've been doing what they're supposed to be doing—namely keeping detailed, accurate records and paying what they owe on time.

A safety audit is similar in terms of depth and objective analysis. However, unlike an IRS audit, there's no immediate penalty if errors emerge—as long as you take action quickly.

Audits are integral to the success of health and safety programs. OSHA recommends that employers of all kinds conduct regular safety audits "to promptly correct all violations of the [Occupational Safety and Health Act] that are discovered in order to ensure safety and health in the workplace." And while OSHA doesn't mandate them, the agency increasingly expects to see them—shaming and imposing hefty fines on companies that don't conduct them regularly.

During a safety audit, an auditor or team of auditors scrutinizes your organization's safety program for gaps, problems, and inefficiencies. The auditing party has 3 basic priorities:

- 1 **Uncover issues** that endanger people's health and safety.
- 2 **Identify areas of non-compliance** with occupational health and safety regulations.
- 3 Assess other opportunities to **improve the program**.

A good safety auditor will tell you in no uncertain terms what your organization is doing well and what needs to be fixed. As with an IRS audit, there's nothing to fear if your safety program is operating as it should. But if your people are exhibiting unsafe behaviors or working in hazardous conditions, if your program is deficient or cumbersome—or if you have no formal program in place—you'll have some work ahead of you.

Fortunately, your auditor may be able to help you get on the right track quickly and with minimal expense. Many safety auditors are also safety consultants, meaning they specialize in improving organizational safety and health. They're like physicians—diagnosing the symptoms of poor EHS performance and then treating any underlying causes.

Audits vs. Inspections: What's the Difference?

Safety audits and safety inspections are similar in that both involve an examination of an organization's EHS program. That said, an audit is distinct from an inspection in 2 fundamental ways:

Safety audits are more in-depth than safety inspections

Safety audits and safety inspections are typically performed by different people.

Safety audits are more in-depth than safety inspections

Inspections tend to focus on physical facilities, hazards, and controls. An inspection may center on questions such as the following:

- ◆ Are all chemical containers labeled?
- ◆ Are there any boxes blocking exit routes?
- ◆ Is machinery well-maintained and properly guarded?
- ◆ Are workers performing their duties safely and wearing all necessary personal protective equipment?



An **audit** addresses the same kinds of concerns, but also goes beyond immediate hazards to examine behind-the-scenes workplace safety systems and additional human factors:

- ◆ What do the organization's safe workplace policies look like?
- ◆ Are people adhering to policies?
- ◆ Is the safety program focused on the right goals?
- ◆ What kind of training is provided to employees? Is the training comprehensive and up-to-date?
- ◆ Is there any health and safety software in place? Is it the best possible software?
- ◆ What data points are being collected?
- ◆ Are there any short- or long-term legal risks the organization should be aware of?
- ◆ Is leadership truly on board with the program?
- ◆ Is the organization investing enough money in safety and using the budget effectively?
- ◆ How could the safety program become more efficient?

Essentially, a safety audit determines the extent to which an organization has developed a safety culture—the invisible force that unites people around taking care of themselves and each other.

Safety audits and safety inspections are typically performed by different people

Managers, supervisors, foremen, and other on-site personnel are usually the ones who conduct safety inspections. By contrast, a safety audit is a job for an external, third-party professional.

Note that OSHA allows organizations to perform “self-audits,” which “must be conducted by or supervised by a competent person who is capable of identifying the relevant workplace hazards.” As the agency recognizes, not every organization can afford to hire an auditor, nor does every organization have a person with “engineering, scientific, industrial hygiene, or other relevant professional accreditation” on staff. However, whenever possible, an audit should be conducted by an independent professional.

As discussed prior, internal employees and stakeholders lack the objective perspective—and often, the training—to perform audits themselves. They may not know what to look out for, or might see only what they want to see.

Moreover, the time and expense involved in an internally-managed audit frequently exceed the costs of hiring a third-party auditor. Keep in mind that every hour an employee spends on the audit is an hour that could have been spent on work.

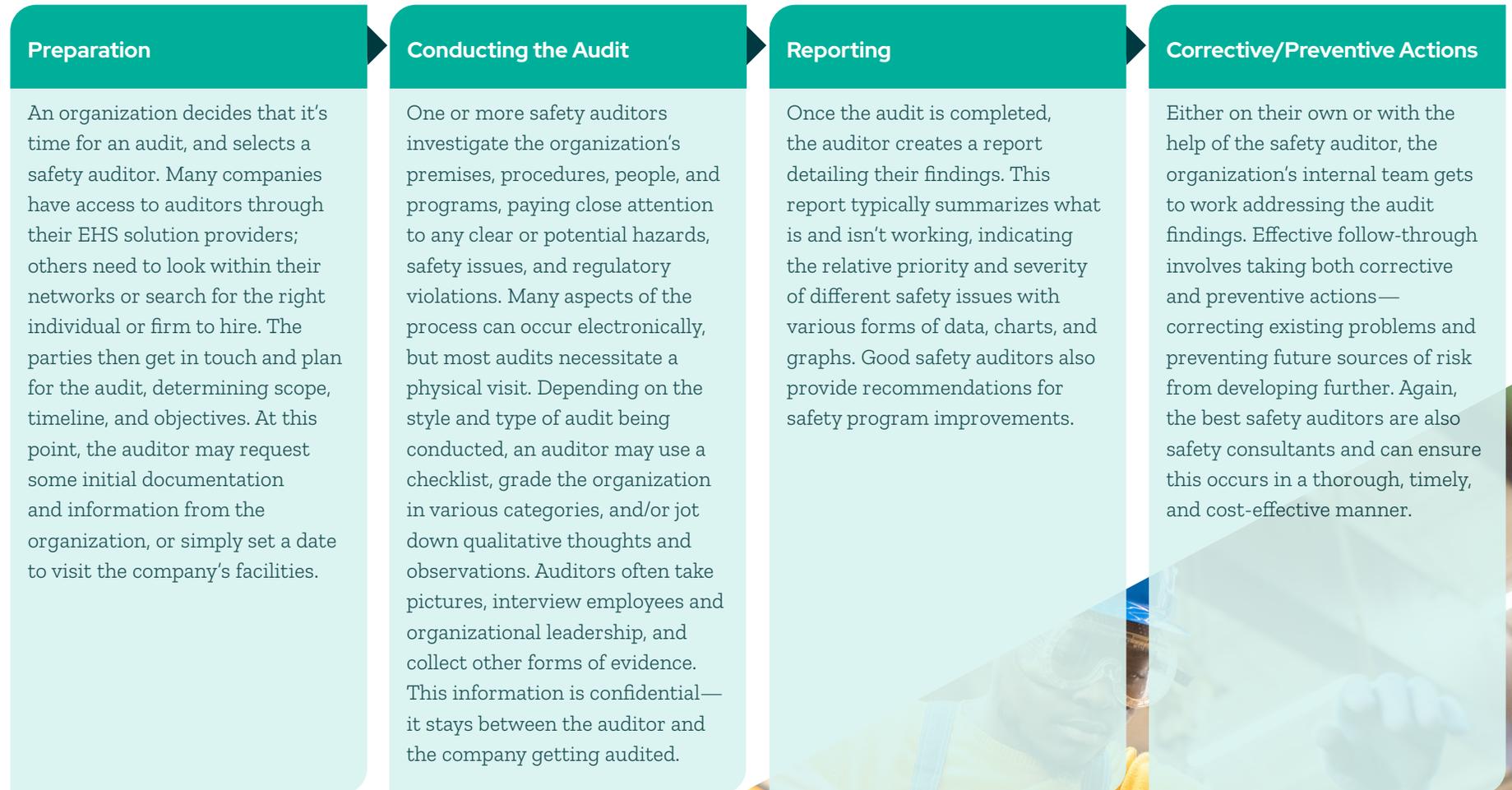
Organizations that conduct self-audits without the aid of a third party may also expose themselves to legal liability. In an article in Modern Contractor Solutions, labor attorney Michael Rubin writes:

“As a preliminary matter, if you do decide to perform a self-audit, you should be prepared to implement any required changes to eliminate and/or mitigate any discovered hazards. If you fail to do so, and OSHA later shows up, you could receive a ‘willful’ violation for allowing a known hazard to exist at your workplace. In certain cases, you might even expose yourself to criminal penalties.”

An independent, third-party auditor will not only ensure your audit catches every problem, but that your organization immediately implements the necessary corrective and preventive measures.

What does a safety audit look like?

Whoever performs it, a safety audit usually involves the same basic steps:



How often should audits be conducted?

Generally speaking, an organization should conduct a safety audit at least once per year.

However, some organizations—particularly larger organizations—perform safety audits more often (e.g. every 6 or 3 months) to minimize their risks. Other companies are obligated to perform audits at specific dates due to internal policies, pressure from customers or shareholders, or orders from OSHA or another regulatory body.

Significant changes in business, technology, laws and regulations, working conditions, and workforce composition also trigger safety audits. For example, if you recently opened a plant in another state, hired 100 new employees, or purchased a fleet of forklifts, it's probably a good idea to conduct a safety audit.

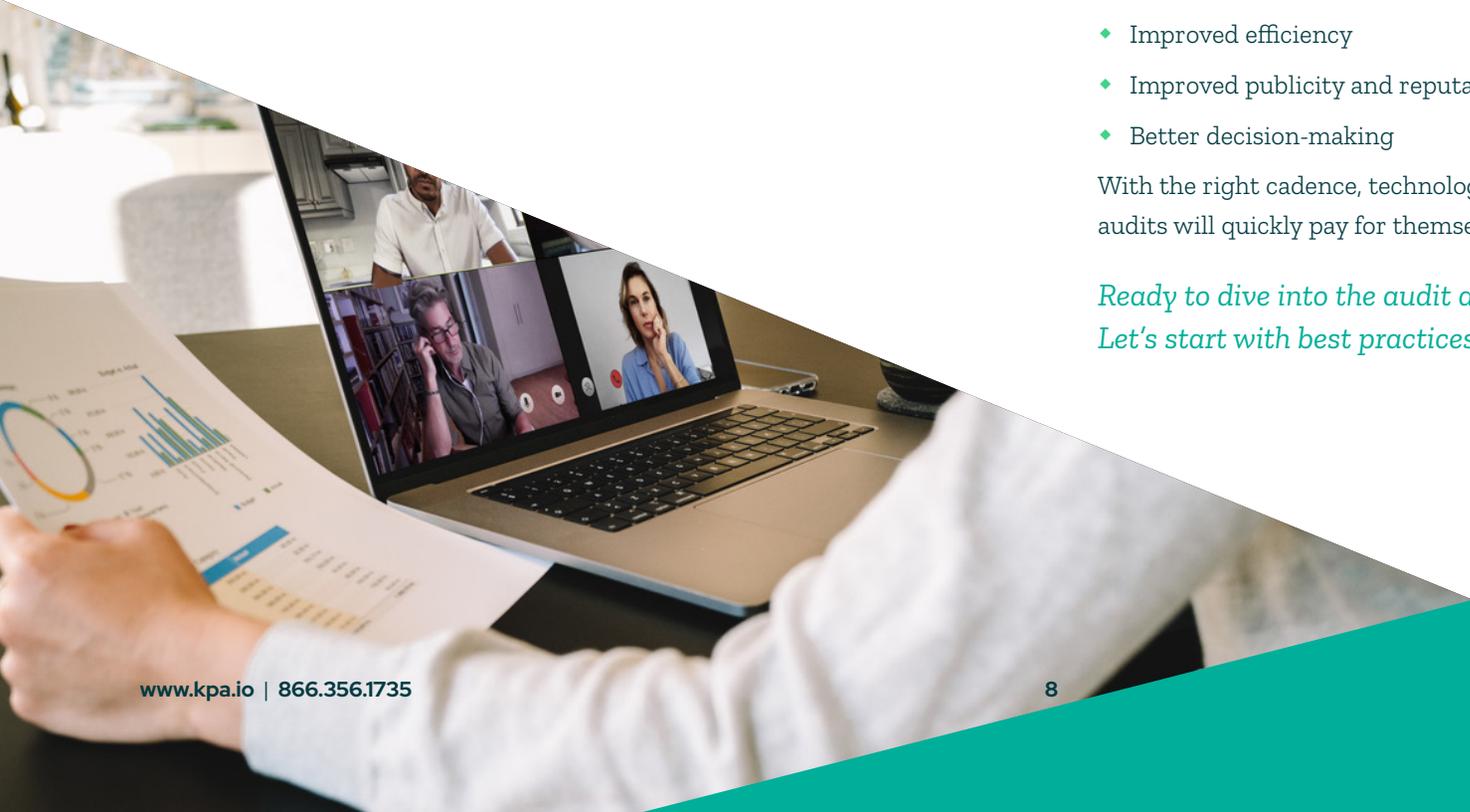
What are the benefits of conducting a safety audit?

Regularly-occurring safety audits offer myriad benefits to organizations, as well as their employees, contractors, and customers:

- ◆ Improved workforce safety
- ◆ Fewer accidents, injuries, and illnesses
- ◆ Lower workers' compensation costs
- ◆ Fewer legal claims
- ◆ Less regulatory uncertainty and compliance risk
- ◆ Less turnover
- ◆ Greater productivity
- ◆ Improved employee morale
- ◆ Improved efficiency
- ◆ Improved publicity and reputation
- ◆ Better decision-making

With the right cadence, technology, and safety partner by your side, safety audits will quickly pay for themselves.

*Ready to dive into the audit and inspection process?
Let's start with best practices for regulatory audits.*



The Regulatory Audit

What it covers

- ◆ OSHA compliance
- ◆ EPA compliance
- ◆ DOT compliance
- ◆ NFPA compliance
- ◆ Compliance with state and local regulatory requirements



Examples of questions an auditor should ask:

- ◆ Are all employees trained properly?
- ◆ What are your safety policies, and are employees actually following them?
- ◆ Is any written compliance program in place?
- ◆ Have you conducted a hazard assessment?
- ◆ What is the condition of personal protective equipment?
- ◆ What are your chemical storage procedures?
- ◆ Do you have all required hazardous materials paperwork?
- ◆ What are your machine guarding (AKA Lockout/Tagout) procedures?
- ◆ What are your respiratory protection procedures?
- ◆ Are any fall hazards present in the workplace?
- ◆ What are your shipping, warehousing, and transportation procedures?
- ◆ Are sprinkler systems in good working order?
- ◆ Is all necessary safety signage in place?

Regulatory audits often cover:



OSHA Compliance



EPA Compliance



DOT Compliance



NFPA Compliance

When people think about safety audits, they tend to think about the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. That’s no coincidence. OSHA expects organizations to audit their operations regularly. And audits are the most reliable way to avoid the agency’s hefty penalties — by uncovering compliance problems before they lead to violations.

Ensuring OSHA compliance is only one function of a safety audit, but it’s a great place to start. After all, OSHA’s regulations encompass the foundation of an effective safety program. They’re the bare minimum of what every employer should be doing to keep workers safe. That is to say...

Don’t mistake a regulatory audit for a safety audit.

It’s part of a safety audit, but it’s not the whole shebang. It’s typically just the first phase—the initial check for issues that would likely result in injuries, penalties, or both if not addressed as soon as possible.

Not sure what to expect during a regulatory audit? Here are a few things auditors are looking for:

 **OSHA Compliance**

During a regulatory audit, an auditor will look at a facility’s training program, documentation, and hazard assessment protocols to ensure compliance with OSHA rules and standards. Examples of questions include the following:

- ◆ Has every employee undergone basic health and safety training?
- ◆ Have employees completed required training?
- ◆ Is training tailored to each employee’s position?
- ◆ Has everyone who needs to be certified to carry out a certain task (e.g. forklift operation) achieved necessary certification?
- ◆ Is training accurate and up-to-date?

- ◆ Are employees completing required refresher training?
- ◆ How do employees behave in the workplace? Are they performing their work safely, even when left unsupervised or when an auditor's not around?
- ◆ Does the facility have applicable written OSHA programs?
- ◆ Is the written program accurate and complete? Is the facility actually following what it says?
- ◆ Has a personal protective equipment hazard assessment been completed? When was it last evaluated?
- ◆ Have facility operations changed recently? If so, are there new hazards to be aware of?
- ◆ What are the workforce's current respiratory needs?
- ◆ Are there new chemicals on-site?
- ◆ Can employees access Safety Data Sheets? Do they know how to access them?
- ◆ Is a Lockout/Tagout program needed? If so, has it been implemented, and have employees been trained on it? Is all necessary LOTO equipment in place?
- ◆ Has the facility evaluated its fall hazards? Does anyone on staff ever work above 4 feet or near an unprotected edge?
- ◆ Is the equipment that employees use in good condition? Were required equipment inspections completed?



EPA Compliance

In addition to looking out for workforce health and safety concerns, an auditor will check to see whether the facility is adhering to Environmental Protection Agency regulations:

- ◆ Does the facility generate hazardous waste?
- ◆ Is there an Environmental Protection Agency ID number?
- ◆ Are the generator status and owner information accurate?
- ◆ Are all of the hazardous waste manifests organized and kept on-site?
- ◆ Has the facility thought about its e-Manifesting needs in 2021?
- ◆ Does the facility require an air permit? If so, is it on file? Does it need to be updated?
- ◆ How many storage tanks are kept on-site? Do they need to be registered?
- ◆ Should the facility have a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure plan in place?
- ◆ How about a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan?
- ◆ Are there hazardous chemicals stored on-site? If so, what chemicals and how many?
- ◆ Does the facility need a Tier II plan? If so, who is filing that with the state?
- ◆ Does AC recovery happen on-site? If so, are employees properly trained on it, and has all AC recovery equipment been registered?



DOT Compliance

Some regulatory audits address the entire facility while others are more department-specific. When it comes to shipping, warehousing, or transportation, for instance, an auditor will pay close attention to any Department of Transportation compliance issues:

- ◆ Are hazardous materials loaded and unloaded properly? Are hazardous materials shipped on-site?
- ◆ Are employees trained on DOT regulations?
- ◆ Is the proper DOT signage posted?
- ◆ Are shipment papers filled out accurately?



NFPA Compliance

National Fire Protection Association standards may seem less significant than OSHA or EPA compliance, but it's certainly in a facility's best interest to prevent fires:

- ◆ Does the facility's on-site chemical storage require a hazardous materials permit, either from the state or local fire department? (Some fire departments require a hazardous materials inventory so they know what to expect if they have to respond to an emergency at the location.)
- ◆ Has the sprinkler system been inspected? Are any sprinkler heads obstructed?

These are only a handful of the kinds of questions an auditor will ask to keep your organization in compliance with workforce health and safety rules. They may seem granular, but as they say, the devil (like the \$13,000+ penalty) is in the details.

Keep in mind that regulatory compliance is only one function of a safety audit. Audits also serve to proactively reduce workforce safety risks and improve efficiency. In other words, an effective audit goes beyond just keeping the organization in line with the letter of the law. If you're only conducting audits to ensure compliance, you're missing critical opportunities to keep people safe and save money.

The Facility Inspection

What it covers

- ◆ Department-specific regulatory compliance
- ◆ Department-specific safety hazards
- ◆ Equipment and machinery
- ◆ Documents
- ◆ Employee behaviors



Examples of questions facility inspections should consider:

- ◆ What is the layout of your facilities?
- ◆ Are your ladders in good condition?
- ◆ How about your forklifts?
- ◆ Have you tested your alarms recently?
- ◆ Where are your eyewash stations?
- ◆ How about your fire extinguishers?
- ◆ What's the condition of walking and working surfaces?
- ◆ Does anything require maintenance?
- ◆ Are employees trained to use the tools they're using, and are they using their tools safely?
- ◆ How are employees performing their jobs?
- ◆ Do employees have any feedback about how to improve the EHS program?

Like any organizational initiative, the success of a workforce health and safety program comes down to people. A company can make a substantial investment in safety planning, management, software, and training, but it's all in vain if individual workers and teams don't follow through in their day-to-day jobs.

Similarly, a lack of cohesion can sink organization-wide safety efforts. If a certain facility or department—or even one person— isn't 100% on board with the safety program, the entire company is at risk. A single incident can result in serious injuries or loss of life, as well as 5- or 6-figure penalties and additional expenses.

This is why it's essential to regularly evaluate your workplace through facility inspections.

What are facility inspections?

A facility inspection serves as an in-the-weeds, department-by-department investigation of an organization's premises, teams, and workforce behaviors.

As with a regulatory audit, a facility inspection is one component of a comprehensive safety audit. The language can get somewhat ambiguous here—many people use the words "audit" and "inspection" interchangeably when referring to an assessment of an organization's physical location, controls, and workers. For the purposes of this section, we'll be referring to the practice as an "inspection," as unlike a full audit, it's something an organization can perform on its own, without the aid of a third-party expert.

When an expert is brought in, facility inspections are usually the second phase of a safety audit. After evaluating overall compliance with OSHA, the EPA, and other regulatory authorities, an auditor will drill down to look for more specific, targeted concerns.

Here are some things KPA's safety consultants do when conducting facility inspections:

When an expert is brought in, facility inspections are usually the second phase of a safety audit. After evaluating overall compliance with OSHA, the EPA, and other regulatory authorities, an auditor will drill down to look for more specific, targeted concerns.

Here are some things KPA's safety consultants do when conducting facility inspections:



Check Regulatory Compliance, Equipment, and Documentation



Look for Department-Specific Hazards



Focus on Employee Behaviors



Check Regulatory Compliance, Equipment, and Documentation

The same regulations don't apply to every department. Different teams perform different duties, use different tools, and have different levels of risk. Auditors must therefore know which rules cover which employees and check to make sure everyone is doing their specific job safely.

The same goes for equipment such as ladders, forklifts, alarms, eyewash stations, and so forth. Teams have their own equipment, but all tools and machines need to be functional, properly maintained, and used in accordance with workplace safety laws and standards.

Documentation and communication are pivotal here, particularly in terms of documenting equipment inspections. Documentation takes different forms. Some equipment has individual tags, making it easy to note the date on it and who inspected it. Other organizations may want a comprehensive list of all equipment like fire extinguishers, so they can make notes on the list rather than each individual extinguisher.

Most inspections are visual, but some will require an employee or auditor to move the equipment around and test it for good condition.

The frequency of these inspections differs as well. Some equipment needs to be inspected daily, some weekly, some monthly, and others annually. Some departments may have storage tanks and other on-site chemicals that have their own inspection schedules.

Again, you can manage most inspections in-house (which is the only feasible option for daily and weekly inspections), but it's important to periodically also conduct full, more rigorous examinations (i.e. audits) with the aid of a safety consultant or other outside professional.



Look for Department-Specific Hazards

Moving from department to department, an inspector or auditor should scan physical environments from top to bottom, considering questions such as the following:

- ◆ Are there spills or trip hazards to note?
- ◆ What kind of equipment are employees using? Is that equipment in good condition?
- ◆ Are employees trained to use the tools they're using, and are they using their tools safely?
- ◆ What hazards may exist in close proximity to an employee?
- ◆ Is the environment loud or distracting? (If something is bothering you while you're walking around and completing your inspection, it probably disturbs employees who spend a lot more time within that department.)
- ◆ What's the condition of walking and working surfaces? Are there any cracks or holes in the floor? Any damaged railings?
- ◆ Does anything require maintenance?

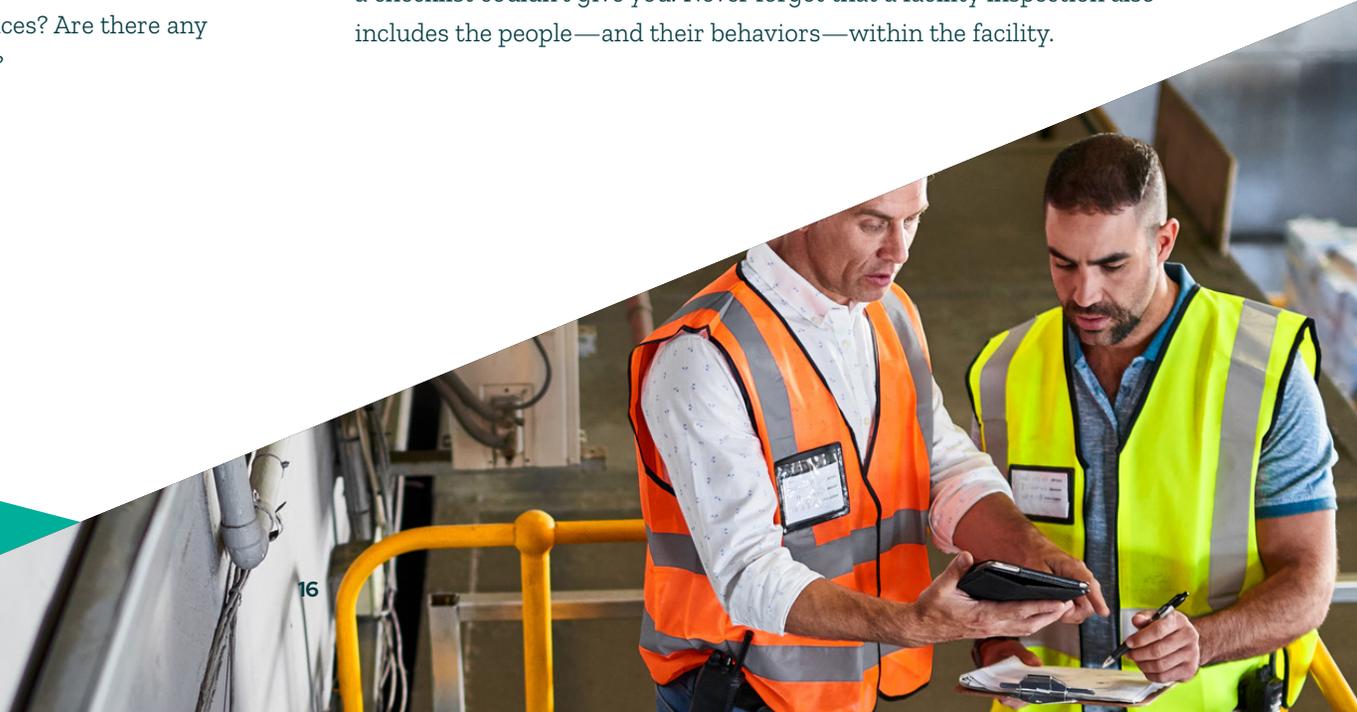


Focus on Employee Behaviors

Doing an inspection means plenty of moving around—walking, crouching, picking up and manipulating objects—but it also requires an auditor to pause, observe, listen, and reflect. A quick scan of an environment doesn't tell you everything. Before moving on to the next room or department, stand still for a few minutes and take note of what's going on. Don't only look at the tools; watch how people use them.

An inspector or auditor needs to ask questions and engage with employees. If you don't know how a tool works, ask people about it. Employees love talking about their jobs.

Ask workers if they have any safety issues or suggestions. Incorporating employee feedback will dramatically improve your safety program, as it makes people feel involved and invested, and improvements to the workplace benefit everyone. Plus, you just might gain some knowledge that a checklist couldn't give you. Never forget that a facility inspection also includes the people—and their behaviors—within the facility.



Accident Investigation

What it covers

- ◆ Workplace accidents
- ◆ Employee injuries
- ◆ Incident response
- ◆ Preventive measures
- ◆ Corrective measures
- ◆ Workplace safety trends



Examples of questions an auditor should ask:

- ◆ How many safety accidents have occurred recently?
- ◆ What is the nature of those accidents?
- ◆ What are your accident response procedures?
- ◆ Which employee or employees are responsible for gathering the details, documenting accidents, and following up?
- ◆ Is there a standard, repeatable accident response process in place?
- ◆ Are accidents addressed and documented in a timely manner?
- ◆ Why are accidents happening? What are the root causes?
- ◆ What kinds of accidents occur most often?
- ◆ What are the costs of accidents in the workplace?
- ◆ What can be done to prevent accidents in the future? What organizational practices and operating procedures need to change?

It happens suddenly—without warning. You hear a crash, a grunt, a cry for help. An employee is lying on the ground, unconscious, surrounded by broken equipment.

What do you do next?

Are you prepared to respond and take all the proper investigative actions as quickly, safely, and efficiently as possible?

Don't wait until a scenario like the above occurs to find out. If you haven't fully developed and optimized your accident investigation strategy, the time to do it is now.

The world's safest and best-performing organizations know that the smartest way to minimize workforce risks is to standardize accident investigation procedures in advance—before anyone gets hurt. While these organizations work hard to keep their number of injuries and illnesses at zero, they're aware that accidents can happen regardless of circumstances and controls in place.

Accident investigations also serve an important role in audits and inspections. By determining and addressing the cause of an incident, you'll prevent further (and potentially more serious) incidents from happening in the future. You also might find gaps to close in your safety program—along with opportunities to better adapt your EHS procedures to the specific issues facing your organization.

Here are 4 ways to improve your accident investigation process:

- 1 Determine Who's Responsible

- 2 Create and Accident Investigation Kit

- 3 Evaluate the Root Cause

- 4 Make Necessary Changes

1 Determine Who's Responsible

For accident investigations to happen efficiently—or to happen at all—the organization needs to identify and communicate responsibility. Which employee or employees will conduct investigations? Who gathers the initial details? Who will be responsible for following up? Every member of the organization should know what to do and who to go to in the event that someone gets hurt.

2 Create an Accident Investigation Kit

Investigations can rarely wait. After all, evidence of accident conditions can disappear within moments following an incident. The key to timely response is a well-prepared accident investigation kit.

This kit should include all the materials you need to gather information about the incident, along with clear instructions for steps to take—preferably in a checklist format. A checklist helps ground the investigation and ensure consistency. This is particularly important during crisis situations, when adrenaline and emotions run high and people might not be able to think clearly.

Other items usually found in an accident investigation kit include...

- ◆ barricade tape
- ◆ accident signage
- ◆ a camera
- ◆ a tape measure or another measuring device
- ◆ personal protective equipment
- ◆ pens and reporting forms
- ◆ blank accident investigation forms

Store these items in a small box or another container in a convenient, visible location, so you can grab the kit quickly on the go.

3 Evaluate the Root Cause

After you gather the evidence of an accident, you'll need to sit down and assess the incident to find out its root cause. This isn't about determining fault, necessarily, but about understanding why what happened, happened. If you're new to accident investigations, use some tried and true methods such as the fishbone diagram and the 5 whys.

Whatever approach you use, the goal is to determine why. Keep asking why until you get to the root cause. You might be surprised at what answers you stumble upon when asking why an employee wasn't wearing the necessary PPE, for instance, or why they were feeling rushed.

4 Make Necessary Changes

Once you get down to that root cause, the next step is to think about what changes may need to be made to prevent a similar accident in the future. What was the outcome of the incident? Does a job, activity, or standard operating procedure need to change? Do we need to retrain employees or stimulate a change in behavior?

In addition to looking at employee injuries, pay attention to property damage, malfunctioning vehicles and equipment, and other potential indicators that change is necessary. Look historically and holistically at patterns and trends to gain deeper insights into your risks and the efficacy of your EHS program.

This is perhaps the most important part of the accident investigation process. The information you collect truly matters because it may lead to an improvement.



Safety Committee Meetings

What it covers

- ◆ Overall EHS program function and effectiveness
- ◆ EHS program efficiency
- ◆ Safety team roles and responsibilities
- ◆ Current priorities and improvements to make
- ◆ Timetables for implementing changes
- ◆ EHS program budget and costs



Examples of questions safety committees should consider:

- ◆ Are all employees working as safely and efficiently as possible?
- ◆ Are all members of the organization, including leadership, engaged and represented in EHS program decisions?
- ◆ What safety and regulatory risks does the organization currently face?
- ◆ What aspects of the organization's EHS program are functioning as intended?
- ◆ Are there any gaps in the program?
- ◆ What needs to be improved?
- ◆ How soon will changes be made?
- ◆ What are the costs of improvements?
- ◆ What is the ROI of an optimized safety program?
- ◆ Who is responsible for coordinating EHS program changes?
- ◆ What will the schedule be for inspections and audits moving forward?

You're feeling pretty accomplished. You've conducted a comprehensive regulatory audit as well as a rigorous facility inspection, and nailed down your accident investigation procedures. But your work isn't quite finished yet.

Audits and investigations can't happen within a vacuum.

The risks and inefficiencies they uncover need to be addressed. To keep people safe, healthy, and out of trouble, the organization needs to commit to creating real change in the workplace.

This is where your safety committee comes in. The safety committee brings audit and inspection findings into focus so leadership can begin making decisions.

Following their walkarounds, checklists, and observations, the auditing party shares their results with the committee. Members then convene to determine the organization's next course of action, prioritize improvements, and assign people to make changes.

Here are a few basic steps for creating a safety committee, running committee meetings, and following through with all necessary environment, health, and safety program updates:

- 1 Recruit the Right Safety Committee Members

- 2 Get Organized

- 3 Plan Each Meeting Ahead of Time

- 4 Assign Responsibilities



1 Recruit the Right Safety Committee Members

Choose safety committee members wisely. A safety committee needs advocates at all levels throughout the organization, including leadership. There will likely be decisions to make about resources or financial support—and those decisions can only happen with senior management’s approval and input.

In addition to senior managers, your committee should also include department managers, your HR manager, and one or more key employees from each department. All committee members should be aligned on goals and share a commitment to employee health and safety.

Be careful with how you form your safety committee. Depending on the state or states in which you operate, you may have certain rules to abide by in terms of the committee’s function, as well as employee involvement and representation within the committee. Some states require quarterly safety meetings while others don’t—so be sure of the rules in your area.

2 Get Organized

Well-organized documentation is a must. Don’t neglect your paperwork and reporting. It may seem like extra effort, but it cements the foundation for a functional health and safety program—one that stays ahead of issues and improves over time.

First, state the safety committee’s purpose, then document bylaws, responsibilities, procedures, and goals. These should include a standard agenda the committee will follow during each meeting, as well as specific activities that will happen monthly, quarterly, and/or annually, along with the person responsible for each activity.

Also, determine how long committee members will serve. You might want to consider staggering members’ terms to ensure continuity when new people join and exit.

3 Plan Each Meeting Ahead of Time

Effective committees don’t simply happen. They’re the result of continuous planning. Ideally, it works like a cycle. The committee identifies the purpose of each meeting, and determines whether it can be met within that meeting’s timeframe. If not, the item gets pushed to the next meeting, and the process repeats.

Every meeting should have a detailed agenda identifying topics and which members can share knowledge about those topics. This can help you determine when you might need to bring in a subject matter expert.

Whenever possible, distribute the agenda to committee members in advance. This not only ensures people come prepared to discuss topics, but also keeps the meeting flowing smoothly and on track.

4 Assign Responsibilities

The key to an effective safety committee is accountability. Every committee member has a responsibility to the organization and their co-workers to improve the workplace’s safety and health program, culture, and outcomes.

Many safety committees fall short by not being consistent and specific with accountability. When you identify an action item, make sure to put someone’s name next to it. It shouldn’t always be the chairperson or your safety manager. Every member who’s a part of the committee is able and should be willing to execute on their shared responsibility.



All That's Only the Beginning

This guide contains just a small portion of the questions, steps, tools, and processes involved in effective workplace safety audits and inspections.

We'll level with you—audits and inspections can be a lot of work.

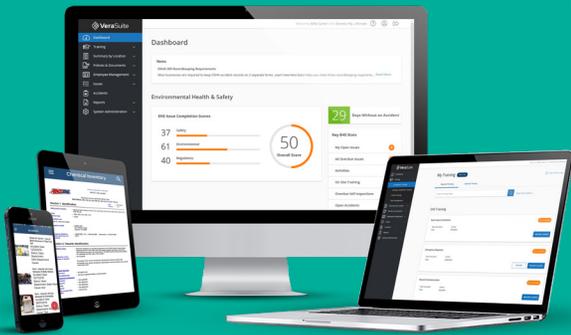
But they're easier, cheaper, and a whole lot less stressful than dealing with accidents, losses, penalties, legal claims, workforce turnover, and the myriad other adverse consequences of a poor EHS program.

Effective audits and inspections not only save lives, but also tend to...

- ◆ lower workers' compensation costs,
- ◆ prevent citations and fines, and
- ◆ boost workforce productivity and retention.

Fortunately, you don't have to do all this work alone—nor should you, if you want to catch everything. Gain total visibility and control over your safety program, risks, and costs with KPA's expert health and safety consulting services, software, and workforce training.





Get Started with KPA

Find out how KPA can turn your organization into a better, safer place to work.

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Send us an email: info@kpa.io

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Access Expert Safety Auditors + EHS Software and Training with KPA

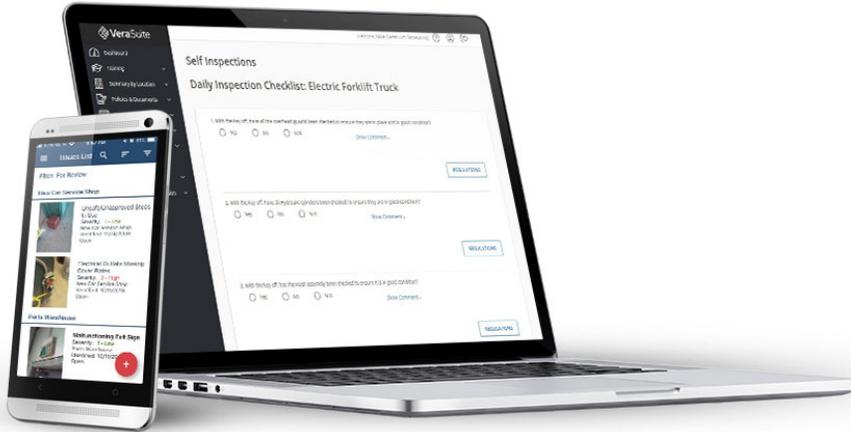
KPA is the leader in safety audits and EHS consulting services. Our team has the knowledge and tools you need to keep your employees safe, minimize your risks, and maximize your organization's performance.

KPA's **EHS consultants** will address safety issues at your facilities before they lead to injuries, fines, and lawsuits. Working on-site, remotely, or both, your KPA Risk Management Consultant will work with you to identify potential risks, develop programs and training, and take action to mitigate risk. Our goal is to help ensure a safe workplace for your employees through programs aligned with EPA and OSHA requirements, so your people can work at their best—while you avoid citations and potential legal action.

Plus, we provide **award-winning, interactive safety training** covering over 100 key topics—ranging from equipment and machine safety to industry regulations, internal policies, ethics, employment law, harassment prevention, and more.

It's all supported by **Vera Suite**: our powerful, cloud-based EHS software platform. Vera Suite helps organizations across industries maintain cultures of safety, streamline operations, and comprehensively manage risk.

Audit & Inspection Tools in Vera Suite



Vera Suite users have the power to create inspection templates, customize existing EHS compliance templates, and assign inspections to individual users for completion. Inspections can be tailored to the specific needs of your facility, making it even easier to remain compliant with federal and state workplace safety regulations. By streamlining inspection processes, you'll quickly uncover issues and address them with corrective and preventative actions before an incident occurs.

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Webinar: Audit & Inspection Best Practices

In this webinar, we'll begin by clarifying the difference between audits and inspections and review best practices for building a comprehensive program.

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Solution Brief: Discover Vera Suite

The all-in-one EHS and workforce compliance software platform to help organizations maintain safety, streamline operations, and manage risk.

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