

# The New ANSI/ASSP Z10.0 Standard and Its Implementation

The newest ANSI/ASSP Z10 standard provides a robust update to well-respected safety system model and incorporates significant new concepts, approaches and tools.

BY GREG ZIGULIS



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**M**any *Occupational Health & Safety Magazine* readers probably know that newest version of the ANSI/ASSP Z10 standard (ANSI/ASSP Z10.0-2019, Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems) was approved in August of 2019. This article summarizes some important and interesting changes made in this version, mentions some features of its new and helpful “sister documents,” and shares implementation considerations.

But first, briefly, what is an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS) standard?

An OHSMS **standard** is a document that describes a required set of processes intended to help organizations improve safety and reduce the risk of injuries and illnesses. There are a few different OHSMS models, and they tend to have several requirements in common.

Z10.0-2019 is a *consensus* standard developed under the protocols of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), with the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) as Secretariat. It essentially provides an outline for what a comprehensive system would include. Representatives from a wide variety of

organizations and viewpoints participated in the revision of 2019.

Z10.0-2019 uses a “systems-thinking” approach, recognizing that an organization’s processes are dynamic and interrelated. It requires that organizations have or support critical processes that take the interrelationships into account to optimize outcomes. The Z10.0-2019 factors in both technological and social factors that can influence performance. It requires having occupational health and safety (OHS) policies and objectives and ensuring that necessary processes are in place to achieve those objectives and continually improve OHS. The requirements are largely macro in nature and provide organizations with flexibility in their fulfillment. Z10.0-2019 emphasizes systems and how they are managed, as opposed to being about individual programs (e.g. energy control/lock-tag-tray). Hazard and OSHA-specific programs can be needed to address OHS issues, but they are not at the center of “this” standard.

An OHSMS is, then, the system that an organization puts into place that supports an OHS policy, provides for both achieving objectives and continual improvement. Organizations wanting to claim conformance to a particular OHSMS standard must meet the requirements of that standard.

Some people have (erroneously) presumed that the 2019 revision of Z10 (Z10.0-2019) is a minor update to this Plan-Do-Check-Act based management system. After all, the first Z10 was published in 2005, revised in 2012, and then again in 2019. However,

this is not the case! The revised standard incorporates several important new concepts and changes in emphasis.

Z10.0-2019 still has an Annex with Explanatory and Advisory text but is now also supplemented by “Guidance” documents that contain a significant amount of new and helpful information. One of these is the ASSP GM-Z10.100-2019: Guidance and Implementation Manual for ANSI/ASSP Z10.0-2019, Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems. This great addition includes a primer on systems thinking as well as important and evolving safety concepts such as for dynamic systems, the “New View of Safety,” fatal and serious injury and illness prevention, occupational health considerations and others. It provides a concise compendium of related background information.

The other supplemental document is ASSP GM-Z10.101-2019: Guidance Manual: Keep Your People Safe in Smaller Organizations. This is a guidance manual that is designed for small- and medium-sized enterprises. It contains down to earth and practical approaches to systems implementation for organizations that may not have the resources or infrastructure of larger organizations. Z10.101 has been well received and is available for free download from [assp.org](http://assp.org) (search for “Z10.101”).

### So, What Is in the Revised Standard?

Structurally, the standard was converted into a single-column for-



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the potential for workplace violence risk should be included in risk evaluation. This added emphasis is woven through the standard.

Management Leadership and Worker Participation are described in earlier versions of Z10. However, Z10.0-2019 more clearly defines requirements of and opportunities for top management, and what meaningful worker participation can look like. The standard makes it clear that Top Management needs to promote a “strong organizational culture that supports the OHSMS” (Z10.0-2019 p.7). It also brings worker participation to a new level to include being involved in the determination of acceptable levels of risk. Section 6 of Z10.100, “Encouraging Worker Participation,” has helpful ideas.

Another change is that Z10.0-2019 requires organizations to understand “context of the organization.” This refers to understanding internal and external issues that can impact an organization’s OHSMS success, and the needs and expectations of workers and other interested parties. It requires the organization to understand forces that can influence success, and to plan accordingly. The standard provides examples of issues that could be considered.

A topic with dramatically increased emphasis is that of fatal and serious injury and illness (FSII) prevention. FSII prevention involves a shift in thinking from old-school injury prevention and is important. The Guidance and Implementation Manual (ASSP Z10.100-2019) has a well-developed chapter discussing the underlying concept and provides actionable information.

It should also be mentioned that Z10.0-2019 requires the identification of OHS “opportunities” (not just issues/risks). Organizations need to look for things that can improve performance, consistent with the concept of integrated processes and continual improvement.

Z10.0-2019 also adds reference to “organizational learning.” The concept is not new, but the reference is notable since it links to other safety concepts discussed in ASSP Z10.100, such as for Human and Organizational Performance (HOP) principles, learning from successful work, and appreciative observation.

### Why Use the Z10 Standard?

Z10.0-2019 provides a roadmap for success to those who want to know what peers from a variety of industries think comprises a solid approach. Many organizations have seen improvements in safety (helping their workers) as well as in other business metrics (e.g. retention, job satisfaction/engagement) by applying concepts like those in Z10.0-2019. Also, implementation can be used to satisfy or support certain third-party requirements to implement an OHSMS.

Z10.0-2019 is easy to understand and provides significant background and how-to information. Portions can also be used to help develop communication for use within the organization. Also, there will be even more tools and job aids developed by the Committee in the future.

Z10.0-2019’s requirements can be implemented over time, and, organizations don’t need to start off with a high percentage of initial conformance. There may be fewer hurdles to use of Z10.0-2019 than for other standards.

Companies that implement Z10.0-2019 will find themselves also meeting many of the requirements of ISO 45001. This could

mat (from a two-column), and now has 10 sections (vs. the original seven). The 10 sections are: Scope, Purpose and Application, References; Definitions, Context of the Organization—Strategic Considerations; Management Leadership and Worker Participation; Planning; Support; Implementation and Operation; Evaluation and Corrective Action; Management Review.

The new format aligns more closely with that used by International Standards Organization (ISO) management system standards, including ISO 45001:2018, Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems.

Regarding substantive content, the revised standard continues to require, for example, the identification of OHSMS issues (hazards, legal & other requirements, etc.), risk assessment, strategic and tactically oriented planning, incident investigation with identification of causal factors, the evaluation of corrective actions, emergency planning, auditing, management review meetings and more.

However, the Z10.0-2019 describes these processes being applied in a system-thinking context—meaning that processes are interrelated and should be planned for, budgeted for, and monitored in a way that integrates with other business operations. OHS staff should understand the language of business and impacts upon business, and business leadership needs to take intentional actions to promote and provide for this integration.

There are several other concepts that are newly introduced or more strongly emphasized.

For example, the standard discusses how safety should not be thought of as meeting a particular injury rate goal, or an end state. Rather, it is a condition that is achieved through management of a variety of dynamic processes; it is an “emergent property” of the organization.

The standard also includes a new section about occupational health. Historically there was more of an emphasis on physical hazards. The new standard makes it clear that things like chemical and noise exposures, ergonomic issues, psychosocial stressors and

## ANSI/ASSP Z10.0-2019 can help organizations improve their system for minimizing OHS risks and injury/illness potential.

be helpful if the organization later decides to implement ISO 45001 (sometimes driven by international supply chain requirements).

### Implementation Tips

Z10.0-2019 is not difficult to understand. However, the Guidance documents provide supplemental information, can influence the way an organization thinks about safety, and should be used together with the standard. Smaller organizations can use the ASSP Z10.101 to assess system status and see an incremental approach.

Full implementation will require a team approach and time. Conformance to the requirements may require some adjustment in approaches and thinking—for example, with regard to broader business integration, increased leadership involvement and enhanced worker participation.

It is important for those implementing Z10.0-2019 to communicate effectively with business leadership. Many C-suite executives have backgrounds and training that result in them having a focus, and information filters, that are different than that of many OHS professionals. Be prepared to succinctly state where issues exist,

why something different is needed (including the value to be obtained), the financial impacts and your plan for action. Most executives would like to do the right things for their workers and need your business-based advice. Be sure costs are proportional to risk and business size.

ANSI/ASSP Z10.0-2019 and its corresponding Guidance documents can help organizations improve their system for minimizing OHS risks and injury/illness potential. The 2019 revision introduces new concepts and approaches to safety. Implementation of all or parts of the Z10.0-2019 needs to be done with the buy-in, participation and coordination of top management. Possible approaches for small- and medium-sized enterprises are described in ASSP Z10.101. Implementation should be guided by persons with a solid understanding of the concepts and content of the standard, the business and its current culture. **OHS**

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