

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH  
MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS OF CONTRACTORS IN ACCIDENT PREVENTION  
IN THE GOLD MINING SECTOR OF THE MIDLANDS PROVINCE OF  
ZIMBABWE**

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## **Introduction**

There has been an increase in the contracting out of mining activities in undertaking specialised tasks in underground and above ground operations which are of high risk. Subcontracting provides gains in specialisation to the operator and also in terms of economic efficiency. However, contracting has been used as a means of shifting liability for pension and safety and health obligations of union mine operators to other entities. Stakeholders, however, are concerned with the occupational safety and health (OSH) implications of contractors as noted by the ILO in 2012.

# The problem

There has been an increase in at risk behaviour/ unsafe behaviour among contractors in the gold mines of the Midlands province. This has been mainly due to working without PPE, failure to identify risks associated with their tasks and working without permits. No studies have been done to assess contractor management of occupational safety and health performance in the gold mines of the Midlands.

# Objectives of study

**Aim:** To analyse the effectiveness of contractors' OSH management systems in accident prevention in the gold mines of the Midlands province of Zimbabwe.

## Specific objectives

- Establish the causes of accidents in contractors
- To assess the efficacy of OSH management system in accident reduction

# Methodology

- Key respondents were Contractor management, Operations engineers, section engineers, contractor site foremen, mine SHEQ officers and contractor SHEQ reps.
- Focus was on 3 large scale mines in the province
- 240 mine contractor workers formed the study sample
- Questionnaire survey- for causes of accidents, establishment OSH management system,, efficacy of the system in accident reduction and analysis of safety culture of contractors

# Results and discussion

## Causes of accidents

- Production pressure 27.5% esp. for engineers to meet targets
- Unsafe acts 23.7%: short cuts to meet production targets
- Inadequate risk assessment 16.3%-no experience
- Inadequate labour force 13.1%
- Inadequate supervision 8.8%
- Unsafe condition 6.35
- Inadequate training 4.4%

# Occupational safety and health performance

- This was based on the Deming cycle- the Plan-Do-Check-Act on continual improvement and contractor performance was assessed using data on pre-task risk assessment, visible felt leadership and planned job observations
- **Behaviour based safety**- 69% did not know about BBS and its benefits in accident prevention
  - 28% not sure of BBS, 3% did not know
- BBS promotes safe behaviours at work because behaviour turns systems and procedures into reality

# **Safety culture and establishment of OSH management systems**

- Only 26% had received on the job training on safety and 13% knew company rules
- Shows non-compliance to OHSAS 18 001: 2007 clause 4.4.2 on competence, training and awareness and also supported by Statutory instrument 68 of 1990.
- 41% not sure of management commitment to OSH, 32 felt it was committed and 17% felt that management was not committed
- 50% were not sure contractor was certified to OHSAS 18 001, 33% indicated mines are not certified and only 17% positively indicated that they were certified.
- Hence a total of 83% were not certified to any OSH management system



# Conclusion

- Contractor' OSH man systems are not effective and are riding on the back of the parent companies
- Preventive programmes-planned job observations, visible felt leadership and short term interval control are not well implemented to control accidents
- There is limited involvement by top management in OSH hence increased accidents
- Deficiencies in risk identification, assessment and control, worker participation, consultation and communication and training on OSH issues
- Accidents are mainly due to production pressure, unsafe acts, inadequate risk assessment and inexperienced labour force

# Recommendations

- Management needs to willingly show commitment to OSH issues
- Regular competence training in issues pertaining to risk assessment as required by the OHSAS 18 001 standard
- Method statements and risk assessment documents need to be produced by contractors before commencement of work to show commitment to OSH practices
- Reviewing of daily production targets and ease pressure on employees is essential
- The principal company to undertake contractor assessment and benchmarking and hence regular audits are essential to keep contractors committed to OSH.

# OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

THE GATEWAY TO

**SUSTAINABLE MINING**