

Telarc.



What good auditing looks like?

Why audit?

The purpose of auditing is to answer one question:

“How confident are we that our systems actually work?”

An audit...

- is a **Reality Check**: to verify if operational safeguards work in practice.
- drives **Continuous Improvement**: the insights gained highlight hidden vulnerabilities, allowing teams to strengthen processes proactively.
- builds Stakeholder **Trust**: providing a clear answer to this question reassures leadership, investors, workers, and clients that risks are managed.
- quantifies Operational **Risk**: transforms vague assumptions about security and efficiency of controls into measurable confidence.



Health & Safety Audits

Health & safety auditing is about **performance** and **outcomes**.

Occupational Health & Safety

- identifying hazards,
- understanding risk,
- involving workers in decisions that impact them,
- learning from incidents, and
- continually improving systems that keep people safe

Public Safety

The electricity industry has another responsibility. **The public.**

- How are public risks identified?
- How are vulnerable people considered?
- Are near misses involving the public investigated?
- How are changes to networks assessed?
- Are public complaints treated as learning opportunities?



What does good auditing look like?

A good audit seeks to answer one key question...

“If I observed work being done today, would it be exactly like how the management system says it should be?”

Work as imagined (WAI) is how managers, designers, and rule-makers think tasks happen (neat manuals and strict procedures). **Work as done (WAD)** is the messy, adaptive reality of how people actually perform those same tasks every day to get the job done*.

Often there are gaps between WAI and WAD, which can effectively **make controls ineffective** and expose people to risk of harm.

A good audit aims to learn people aren't doing work as they should be doing it, and make adjustments, so that the systems that are meant to keep people safe can actually keep them safe.

(*<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/businesses/safeplus/resources-and-guidance/a-positive-work-culture/>)

Telarc.



A Good Auditor

The best auditors don't arrive with answers. **They arrive with curiosity.**

Key Traits of a Good Auditor:

- **Open-minded** – does not assume how the management system should be, asks questions to clarify how the organisation has interpreted the requirements
- **Good communicator** – engages leaders and workers in health & safety conversations rather than an interrogation.
- **Inquisitive** – asks questions to understand how the organisation works, how the management system aligns with the standard, and clarify requirements.
- **Learning** - makes the audit a learning experience for themselves as well as for the auditee
- **Engaged** – is genuinely interested in the organisation, the systems and health, safety & wellbeing of people.
- **Transparent** – highlights issues and explains findings on-the-go.
- **Prepared** – has a plan, established clear scope and audit objectives, aware of the context of the organisation, and is flexible



A Good Auditee

Good audits require good auditors. **But they also require good auditees.**

Key Traits of a Good Auditee:

- **Open-minded** – seeks clarity on requirements vs own interpretations.
- **Good communicator** – engages with the auditor in health & safety conversations.
- **Learning** – takes the audit as a learning experience & seeks opportunities to improve.
- **Engaged** – is genuinely interested in the audit process & findings.
- **Transparent** – open and honest.
- **Prepared** – has a plan, aware of scope and audit objectives, and is flexible.



Value-add Audits

A valuable audit should leave an organisation with:

- ✓ Better **understanding** of risk
- ✓ Stronger leadership **conversations**
- ✓ Improved worker **engagement**
- ✓ Better public **protection**
- ✓ Practical ideas for **improvement**

Not simply: “Five minor non-conformances.”

Success isn’t measured by how many findings an auditor writes.

It’s measured by how much safer the organisation becomes afterwards.



The Future of Audits

The future isn't more audits. **It's better audits!**

Audits that:

- focus on critical risk
- understand human factors
- examine organisational culture
- evaluate learning systems
- encourage innovation
- build trust

Shifting Audit Priorities:

Psychosocial Hazards: Audits now evaluate mental health stressors, workload pressures, and workplace culture alongside physical slips and trips.

Continuous Insights: Moving past annual checklists into live key performance indicators (KPIs) via unified digital portals.

Proactive Metrics: A heavy emphasis on leading indicators (what is going right) rather than lagging indicators (counting past injuries).



Key Message

The best audit I've ever seen wasn't remembered because it found dozens of non-conformances.

It was remembered because six months later people were still talking about the conversations it started.

Good auditing is:

- Risk-based rather than checklist-based
- Curious rather than judgmental
- Evidence-informed rather than document-focused
- Focused on effectiveness rather than compliance
- A catalyst for continual improvement
- A partnership in learning
- Focused on protecting both workers and the public

“The best audit is not the one that finds the most problems. It is the one that inspires the most improvement.”



THANK YOU

