



DETAILED HEALTH AND SAFETY FILE INDEX

The health and safety file often creates a problem for contractors and clients alike as there is a definite lack of knowledge and understanding with regard to these legislative requirements. In plain English, the health and safety file is an operational record of all health and safety activities relating to a specific contract.

A safety file should be divided into relevant sections, systematically providing a logical flow of information from start to completion. The following provides an outline of what should as a minimum be presented in the health and safety file:

Part 1 – The introduction

Remember the regulation states that this file must be made available to employees, clients and even inspectors when required. So it makes sense to start the file with an introduction, including the following as a minimum:

- The name of your company. (Include address and contact details)
- Your core business. (Are you a civil, electrical or mechanical contractor)
- Your contract number.
- Your scope of work.
- Contractual start and completion dates.
- The top 5 hazards associated with your scope of work.
- A list of project approved sub-contractors.
- How many people will be employed?
- The name and contact details of the person overall responsible for your health and safety on the project.
- It is also useful to include a project specific commitment statement, which is signed by the CEO as well as all site management. This statement should detail overall commitment to the project health and safety specification as well as legislation. It's always good to start with commitment from the top.

Part 2 – References

The safety file is no different to any other document and consequently it is imperative that we provide a list of sources, which have been referenced in the file. The following is a typical set of references which would be included in this part of the file:

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993.
- OHSAS18001:2007 (Or other relevant management standard)
- All relevant and applicable South African National Standards (SANS)
- The client's health and safety specification.
- Your own internal standards and procedures.
- The EIA (environmental impact assessment) of the project or at least the RoD. (Rule of decision)
- COID Act.
- All other applicable South African Legislation.
- Any applicable international standards.



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Part 3 – Definitions and Acronyms

Health and safety as a profession has its own set of technical terms and abbreviations, which we sometimes as safety professionals assume everyone knows. Put an end to this assumption by clearly identifying and explaining these terms up front. Some generic terms which should be included in this part would be:

- OHSAct (OHS, H&S)
- ISO
- OHSAS
- RA
- HIRA
- SOP/SWP

All terms, abbreviations and technical jargon should be explained up front to avoid any confusion or ambiguous interpretation of your intentions.

Part 4 – Objectives

Although the health and safety objectives for the project are included in your safety management plan it is strongly recommended that it be included in your safety file as well. Include the objectives in a table format clearly defining the objectives and measurement criteria, also providing clear review dates. Project objectives should be married with own corporate objectives to ensure a sound business approach to health and safety. For this part of the file to be successful you need to include documented reviews of the measurement criteria. The following basic objectives are pretty standard to most client specifications:

- Ensuring legal compliance.
- Restricting incidents. (Some clients even set a maximum incidence rate which could be linked to incentives or penalties)
- Competency – can be broad and requires some thought when developing.

Note: Regular measurements are to be recorded against the provided measurement criteria.

Part 5 – Health and safety organization

This part of the file is dedicated to both legislated and organizational roles and responsibilities associated with all health and safety endeavours. To this end I always find it appropriate to include the following information in this part of the file:

- A signed copy of the project health and safety policy. This is good corporate governance and provides organizational commitment to the process.
- A detailed project Organogram, with positions having specific safety obligations highlighted. (Safety officer, Section 16.2, safety reps, first aiders etc.)
- Notification of construction work.
- A complete set of signed appointments. A properly compiled legal appointment will provide clear roles and responsibilities, which have been accepted by the incumbent.
- Any other internal agreements or appointments which serve to ensure the integrity of the health and safety organization. This may include contractual Annexures such as procurement and design requirements.
- Highlight all links with regard to the management of sub-contractors. This would include all mandatory agreements.
- Depending on the size and nature of the project it might even be feasible to include a separate Organogram depicting your health and safety committee.



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Part 6 – Safety planning

This part of the file coordinates both client and internal corporate governance with regard to health and safety implementation and should include the following:

- The Health and Safety Management Plan.
- The Risk Management Plan. (Generic risk assessments may be included)
- The Fall Protection Plan.
- The Emergency Plan. (This could be client driven)
- COID details – including blank claim forms. (Without this information injury management is often hampered)
- Liability insurance.
- Any incentive programs you may have.
- Project baseline schedule along with updates.
- Management review plan.

Part 7 – Occupational Health

In this part of the file the following should be maintained:

- As a minimum a table containing: the name of every employee, date of pre-employment medical, date of next annual medical required as well as any limitation which may exist.
- Proof that employees with limitations are managed.
- Copies of medical fitness certificates. (Don't duplicate if already part of individuals personnel file)
- Man-job specifications.

Part 8 – Operational Controls

This part of the file identifies and monitors operational controls with a view to realizing the objectives and includes the following:

Procedures/operating standards relating to specific operational aspects such as:-

- Excavations.
- Demolition and blasting.
- Use of plant and machinery.
- Lifting and rigging practices.
- Scaffold erection and use.
- Working at height.
- Handling and storing hazardous chemicals.(Include MSDS's)
- Manual handling of material.
- Stacking and storage practices.
- Cutting and grinding.
- Painting and sand blasting.
- Confined space work.
- Isolation and lockout. (Often driven by client standards)
- Incident investigation.
- Permits.



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Verification of operational controls through checklists and registers:-

- Daily vehicle checks.
- Scaffold inspections.
- Design drawings for staging and formwork, along with pre-use inspection checks.
- File all permits issued. Maintain a permit register.
- Equipment inspections – hand tools, portable electric equipment etc.
- Completion of all registers and checklists as per legislative requirements applicable to the scope of work.

Part 9 – Risk Assessment

Being the cornerstone of our legislation it is only right that it gets its very own part in the file. This part of the file is critical as this is where operational and environmental change will be monitored and assessed, with a view to continuous risk reduction. If correctly managed it is an invaluable source of information to yourself and inevitably the client. The following should form the basis of this part of the file:

- The project risk matrix.
- The risk assessment format.
- An inventory of all critical tasks. (Should be regularly updated to reflect current exposure based on the phase of the project)
- A baseline risk assessment for the scope of work.
- Task specific risk assessments. (Although very difficult to coordinate its imperative that these are channelled back to facilitate the updating of generic risk assessments). These assessments are invaluable to the client for future maintenance tasks.

Proof of training in the relevant risk assessments can also be filed here or preferably under Part 10 of the file.

Part 10 – Communication and training

For communication include the following in this section:

- Minutes of health and safety committee meetings.
- Health and safety coordination meetings with client or contractors.
- Site directives and toolbox talks.
- Awareness campaigns.
- Incident recalls.

The following training records should be kept:

- Induction records. (Include induction material in this part of the file)
- Specific certificates of competency for riggers, crane operators, safety reps, first aiders, risk assessors etc. A review of the regulations against your scope of work will highlight these competency requirements.
- Proof that personnel have received training in the relevant risk assessments.
- Proof of training in site specific operational procedures.
- A good idea is to provide a training matrix in the front listing all employees and required training. This allows an outsider to immediately see who has received what training.



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Part 11 – Incident Management

The following information is relevant to this part of the file:

- Letter of good standing. (COID)
- Sufficient copies of the insurer's incident report form.
- Internal incident reporting format.
- First aid registers are also kept in this file, but it's preferable that they be kept with the first aid box and reviewed during inspections.
- Maintain a register of all incidents with the following information:
 - Date and time of incident.
 - Name of injured.
 - Occupation.
 - Nature of incident.
 - Location of incident.
 - Classification of incident.
 - Days lost and date of resumption.
- All closed out incident investigations are to be filed here.
- All incident recalls.

Part 12 – Emergency Planning

This part of the file serves as proof that the plan is functional and should contain the following:

- Emergency contact details.
- A schedule of planned emergency drills.
- A basic flow diagram depicting the logical sequence of the emergency response plan, per identified emergency. (Injury, fire explosion, etc.)
- A plot plan indicating evacuation points and routes.
- All emergency drills. (Monitoring results and action plans)

Part 13 – Audit and Review

This part of the file proves ongoing monitoring of the program and includes:

- Audit protocol and monthly audit schedule.
- Copies of corporate and external audits.
- All internal audits by yourself or the client.
- Detailed up to date action register.
- Copies of all formal site inspections.

Part 14 – Recording and Reporting

The following should be noted in this section:

- Statistical reports.
- Trends.
- Risk profiles.

The health and safety file is an integral part of the construction process and shouldn't be taken lightly. It not only provides an operational record of all your health and safety endeavors during the course of the project, but provides invaluable information which will allow you to improve your health and safety management system for the next project.



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The transfer of knowledge to the client will allow them to utilize this information in the development of own operational procedures and risk assessments, thus reducing the level of unforeseen exposure.

These files should also be considered as part of any closeout report, for the following reasons:

- It allows learning's to be transferred from the project to the organization as a whole.
- It affords clients the opportunity to assess overall contractor health and safety performance, with a view to future work.
- It affords clients the opportunity to develop safer operational procedures based on hazards already identified and addressed during the construction/commissioning of the project.

We trust that these guidelines will provide some clarity as to the basic content requirements of the construction health and safety file.