



## BS OHSAS 18001 CASE STUDY THALES UK



### Background

Thales UK is a major electronics and systems group serving defence, aerospace, security and services markets. In the UK, Thales delivers solutions from flight simulation and secure transactions to integrated communications, naval and air defence systems. It employs 9,000 people – 70% of them in engineering work on 60 sites across the UK. The UK head office is based at Weybridge in Surrey. The company owes its heritage to the former UK interests of Thomson CSF and Racal Electronics which merged in 2000 to form Thales UK Plc.

### Challenge

Thales UK was formed through a series of rapid acquisitions. The result of which was that it acquired a wide range of operational processes and activities, with an equally diverse range of associated health and safety management practices. A review of

occupational health and safety practices at each UK company was undertaken. The results confirmed the need for greater health and safety management to ensure that health and safety risks are being adequately managed and that compliance with legislation can be demonstrated. After some consideration, it was decided that the best route to achieving this objective would be to implement BS OHSAS 18001 across all UK operations.

The objective of Group-wide implementation of BS OHSAS 18001 in all operating companies was to ensure a more unified approach to occupational health and safety management, thereby improving the work environment for employees, reducing the risk of prosecution, reducing health and safety risks, protecting the company's reputation and identifying opportunities for cost savings.

Additionally it was envisaged that implementing BS OHSAS 18001 would prove very useful in fulfilling the requirements set out in the Thales ethical code and cores values with respect to protecting employees, visitors and the public as well as sharing knowledge and best practice.

Thales works in a number of high-risk environments which requires strong health and safety management. So, when working on customer sites it is important that Thales can demonstrate that it is a responsible organisation, which operates to a recognised health and safety management standard. Increasingly customers are requesting information on health and safety performance as part of the bids and tender process. Certification to BS OHSAS 18001 offers commercial competitive advantage when responding to tenders and answering customer questionnaires for preferred supplier lists.

## Solution

Thales began an ambitious programme of implementing the health and safety management standard, BS OHSAS 18001, across 26 businesses in the UK in only 18 months. The overall aim of the BS OHSAS 18001 implementation programme was to enable organisations to control their Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) risks and improve overall health and safety performance. The programme followed a 20-staged route map and incorporated a number of key strategies. The success of the programme was highly dependent on forming key partnerships between operating companies, certification bodies and training providers.

### *i) Corporate Strategy*

It was recognised from the onset that the corporate environment health and safety team would have to adapt its functions to successfully manage the implementation of BS OHSAS 18001 at the operating company level. In addition, key individuals were identified across the group, including 'health and safety co-ordinators' at an operating company level. The approach adopted was to ensure that each organisation has a competent health and safety person on site, whose level of knowledge matches the hazards present within that particular organisation. This would then empower individual organisations to manage their own health and safety risks and liabilities.

The corporate team devised a programme of events, aimed at introducing the concept of BS OHSAS 18001 to the businesses. This included; a launch event, regular working groups, and training activities to increase the knowledge base of health and safety representatives. A UK roadshow was also organised by the corporate team, aimed at increasing buy-in to the BS OHSAS 18001 strategy from Directors at the operating companies.

### *ii) Training*

The corporate team recognised the vital role of training in providing all relevant staff with the appropriate level of knowledge to ensure that the BS OHSAS 18001 programme was both

meaningful and successful. The training programme included a carefully structured set of workshops, seminars and courses designed to lead key staff through the BS OHSAS 18001 process.

### *iii) BS OHSAS 18001 Toolkit*

At the heart of the BS OHSAS programme is the BS OHSAS 18001 Toolkit. It has been developed in partnership with Harrington Morgan (an external consultancy), to provide a 20-staged practical guide for health and safety co-ordinators, regarding the design, implementation and management of an occupational health & safety management system. It was envisaged early that the Toolkit would allow companies to focus their energies on identifying and controlling health and safety risks, instead of struggling with the structure and arrangement of various OHSMS components. The BS OHSAS Toolkit is made available via both CD-ROM and the intranet.

### *iv) Working with BSI*

The Group E,H&S Manager, Russell Hobbs, has a close working relationship with BSI. Russell Hobbs commented: "I am impressed with the level of professionalism and assistance provided to ensure that the BS OHSAS 18001 programme is successful. BSI was very helpful with assisting operating companies with setting assessment dates and answering any queries promptly."

## Benefits

Working closely with the BSI Client Manager has proved beneficial in implementing BS OHSAS 18001 in operating companies and identifying areas for improvement. Another benefit of using BSI was that it is a well established certification body with an internationally recognised and respected name, which made it the ideal choice for Thales' overseas companies.

To date, 70% of the operating companies have achieved BS OHSAS 18001, including Thales Telecom which has over 30 sites, works within the rail sector and is registered with BSI. Commenting on the achievement, Peter Batley,

Managing Director, Telecommunications Services said, "BS OHSAS 18001 brings many benefits, not only to our employees, but also to our clients, sub-contractors and others, who may be affected by our business activities. It demonstrates our commitment to Occupational Health & Safety in every aspect of our business and I am pleased and proud of achieving this milestone. Congratulations to everyone involved, particularly the BS OHSAS 18001 working group."

Health and safety has increased awareness across the Group and puts health and safety issues on company board management agendas. An active Thales health and safety network has evolved in the UK, which is being supported by ongoing workshops and seminars. Operating companies have realised cost savings from improved control over work equipment and management of chemicals.

Other benefits include:

- Improved health and safety management
- Consistent standard of health and safety management across the group
- Greater standing in company management systems – before BS OHSAS 18001, health and safety may not have been integrated into business processes or decision making
- More empowerment to health and safety practitioners, who are now required to report to management boards
- Improved risk management
- Improved analysis of health and safety performance
- Improved competencies of health and safety practitioners
- Improved understanding of health and safety legislation and ability to demonstrate compliance



**FSC**  
Mixed Sources  
Product group from well-managed  
forests, controlled sources and  
recycled wood or fiber

Cert no. TT-COC-002251  
www.fsc.org  
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

