



**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**  
**Health, Safety, and Risk Management**

**Workplace Safety Inspection Program**

**Effective Date:** February 2022  
**Last Revision:** November 2024

**I. PURPOSE**

The program is to ensure work spaces at the University of Minnesota (UMN) are maintaining compliance with Federal, state and University of Minnesota requirements. Regular, periodic inspections help to keep all workspaces in compliance with regulatory requirements and safe operating condition by identifying health and safety deficiencies.

The goals of the inspections program are the following:

- Check that personnel and departments are following the University of Minnesota health and Safety Programs
- Verify that personnel and departments are following requirements from Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MNOSHA) and other regulatory agencies
- Verify that facilities and equipment are in a safe, code-compliant operating condition
- Ensure that all work activities are conducted in a manner to prevent employee exposure to hazardous chemicals, hazardous biological materials, and unsafe working conditions

**II. SCOPE**

This program applies to all UMN-owned spaces and facilities, and to all workers (employed or volunteers) in UMN facilities and spaces.

**III. AUTHORITY**

This Workplace Safety Inspection Program is part of the University's Occupational Health and Safety administrative policy, which charges Health, Safety and Risk Management (HSRM) with providing leadership, resources, and services to ensure that the University provides a healthy and safe workplace, and that all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures are being implemented and compliance is met. As stated in the policy, all health and safety programs must be followed by all University staff when applicable to the type of work being performed.

**IV. DEFINITIONS**

**Department Safety Officer (DSO)** - A department-appointed safety representative who helps answer questions specific to their department/building and who coordinates with University Health and Safety (HSRM) staff to perform inspections. Department safety officers are appointed by their parent department and often serve on department/college safety committees.

**Deficiency** - A safety concern/violation that requires corrective action from the work area.

**Informal worksite visits** – An unannounced visit by HSRM Staff to perform a quick check of a work space or to investigate a safety concern.

**Inspection Management System** - The software used to record, send, and track inspections. Currently, Workplace Safety uses a program called Safety Stratus to perform and document inspections.

**Workplace Inspection** - A scheduled inspection coordinated with the departmental supervisor or staff member. A visual inspection is performed to verify key risk control and safety management components in a workspace. Results are entered into the inspection management system and sent to the department supervisor, staff and HSRM representatives. Department/college leadership can be copied if requested.

The inspection is considered “open” if there are deficiencies and no response has been received from the department in the inspection management system. The inspection is considered “closed” if there are no deficiencies or if all deficiencies have been corrected and a response has been recorded from the department in the inspection management system.

**Safety Consultation** - A scheduled visit or phone/web call to discuss safety concerns or UMN safety requirements. These are informational and documented where necessary.

**Self-Inspection** - Online form with general safety and risk questions sent via HSRM. A representative from the work area fills out the form and submits it to HSRM within a predetermined amount of time.

**HSRM Safety Partner** – A HSRM Workplace Safety or Lab and Research Safety or Specialist who is assigned to a specific college/department/unit to cover their safety inspections and consultations.

## V. RESPONSIBILITIES

### Departmental Staff Responsibilities

- Participate in inspections as designated by your Supervisor.
- If present during an inspection, answer questions to the best of your ability.
- Provide documentation of corrective action when requested.

### Supervisor (or qualified staff delegate) Responsibilities

- Maintain safety records and ensure that they are available at the time of an inspection.
- Respond to requests for information and inspection scheduling from HSRM staff
- Attend or appoint a staff member to attend any in-person visits.
- Respond or appoint a staff member to correct and respond to any inspection deficiencies in the allotted time frame.
- Schedule, coordinate, and attend inspections with HSRM safety partners.
- Assist HSRM staff in any follow-up items from the inspection.

### Department Safety Officer Responsibilities (Research Areas Only)

- Maintain a current list of all labs in their service area.
- Inform HSRM safety partners when a lab closes, moves, or if a new lab is starting.
- Distribute communications from HSRM safety partners to labs in their service area.
- Schedule, coordinate, and attend inspections between labs and HSRM safety partners.
- Provide oversight and guidance during lab inspections to help check regulatory compliance

and safety in the lab.

- Assist HSRM staff in any follow-up items from the inspection.
- See [DSO Roles and Responsibilities](#) for responsibilities outside of inspections

### **Department/College Responsibilities**

- Assign a supervisor/DSO to each department or service area.
- Inform the supervisor/DSO and HSRM safety partner when changes occurring to staffing, how activities, etc. that may change how this program is implemented.
- Review inspection data and incorporate it into department/college safety initiatives and training.
- Assist HSRM in escalation procedures for work areas who have egregious safety violations, do not resolve audit deficiencies, and who do not respond to inspection requests.
- Provide funding and dedicate staff time for facility improvements, regulated waste clean outs, and violations.

### **Health, Safety, and Risk Management Responsibilities**

- Maintain the inspection written program and review/update the program at least annually.
- Determine the inspection frequency based upon risk for all workspaces, shops, mechanical rooms, etc. at all UMN locations.
- Assign a Workplace Safety (WPS) service partner to work areas.
- Provide annual summary data to University leadership teams
- Coordinate with supervisors/DSOs to schedule and perform inspections.
- Coordinate review of the Workplace Inspection Program annually.
- Track the completion of self-inspections and corrective actions from in-person inspections.
- Upon request, provide summary of inspection data
- Use inspection data to inform UMN-wide safety guidance and initiatives.

## **VI. PROCEDURE**

### **Workplace Hazard Ranking**

HSRM has developed a Workplace Hazard Ranking (WHR) system for inspections to provide a framework to rank the risk and severity of hazards found within each work area. The main objective of WHR is to present an objective approach to prioritize areas for inspections based on:

- Type and quantities of hazardous materials present
- Physical hazards present in a work environment
- Hazardous operations and equipment
- Engineering controls and procedures
- Specific inspection history and performance

HSRM staff will use this ranking system to determine required inspection frequency of work areas and research spaces based on self-inspection answers, processes, etc. A department/college/unit may request more a more frequent inspection cycle and HSRM staff will accommodate these requests as we are able. Temporary work areas (e.g. construction sites, project crew work, etc.) can also be inspected using the in-person or self-inspections.

There are 4 WHR classes ranging from the least hazardous (WHR 0) to the most potentially hazardous (WHR 3). The frequency of audits is defined in the table below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Hazard Ranking Frequency Based on Workplace Hazards**

Workplace Hazard Ranking (WHR)	Hazards Present	Inspection Frequency
WHR 0	Non-hazardous, household products Office based work.	As needed
WHR 1	Minimal quantities of hazardous chemicals ( <a href="#">below posting threshold</a> ) used for surface cleaning Additional spaces may include storage rooms, support spaces, freezer rooms, and irregularly occupied equipment rooms	In-person every 3 years (36 months) Annual Self-Inspection
WHR 2	Typical chemical work involves small volumes of flammable solvents, acids, and toxic chemicals. “Small volume” defined as at or just over the <a href="#">threshold levels for hazard signage</a> posting. Regularly use, dispense, transfer chemicals with ph of two or less and/or twelve or greater. Only non-reactive gases (e.g. nitrogen, helium, argon etc.) are used. Designated Hot Work locations Shop and fabrication spaces with stationary machinery (millwork, welding, sheet metal, mills, foundry, etc.) or portable power tools.	In-person every 2 years (24 months) Annual Self-Inspection

	Areas with equipment that requires Lockout Tagout procedures, regular removal of guarding, entry into confined spaces.	
	Areas where active fall protection is required to access or used.	
WHR 3	Use of hazardous compressed gases (e.g. flammable, oxidizing, corrosive, toxic, etc.).	1 year (12 months) or more often decided upon by HSRM  May require more regular check-ins for changes in process (Management of Change)
	Routine use of carcinogens, acutely toxic materials, sensitizers, and reproductive toxins.	
	Class 3B or 4 lasers with controls	
	Work area requires use of respirator or specialized personal protective equipment	
	WHR 1 and 2 groups with previous major accidents, occupational disease, or poor previous audit results may be moved up into this category	

### Annual Self Inspection

Certain work areas may be required or choose to conduct an annual self-inspection in their space. Self-inspections are important to annually verify/monitor:

- Safety Programs and training are up to date,
- Work is being performed safely and standard operating procedures are up to date,
- Work areas are in compliance with regulatory requirements,
- Precautions are in place to eliminate or reduce the severity of injuries to people and damage to property and the environment,
- Health and safety responsibilities required of the supervisors, front line staff and management.

The self-inspection should be conducted by knowledgeable and trained personnel and provides any updated information to HSRM safety partners. For areas with a large number of spaces (e.g. mechanical rooms), a self-inspection may not be required for all locations each year. The process for completing self-inspections is as follows:

- HSRM staff send the electronic Self Inspection Form to departmental contact for distribution.
- The form is filled out within 30 days.

- HSRM staff check the results and contact the department contact if they have any questions or concerns.
- The completed “result” is logged into our Inspection Management System.

### **Workplace Inspection**

HSRM coordinates with supervisors/DSOs to schedule Workplace Inspections at a frequency appropriate to their WHR. Inspections will be performed in person with personnel present (unless a virtual option is required).

1. HSRM coordinates with the supervisor/DSO to schedule an inspection
2. Inspection team (e.g. HSRM staff, supervisor, and department staff) does a review of documentation and in-person walk through of the work area.
3. HSRM documents hazards.
4. HSRM reviews the findings with inspection teams before leaving.
5. HSRM enters findings in Inspection Management System.
6. HSRM distributes Workplace Inspection Findings memo and copies all HSRM inspectors, the department contact, staff, and other department leadership as requested.
7. HSRM tracks responses to ensure departments respond within the timeframes outlined in the inspection reports. See “Failure to Respond to Deficiencies” below for additional information.

### **Informal Worksite Visits**

Informal worksite visits (“compliance checks”) may be performed announced or unannounced.

- HSRM staff may perform periodic documented compliance observations in work areas.
- HSRM staff will document and track observations during informal visits.
- Results are reviewed and communicated to safety committees and management as needed.
- If an egregious safety violation is observed, Workplace Safety will work with staff to make corrections while on site or coordinate an in-person visit to discuss any concerns.

### **Failure to Respond to Deficiencies**

When a deficiency is identified during an inspection, the amount of time to make a correction is determined by the severity of the finding. Findings are ranked, in order of severity, as low, medium, high, and critical. Failure to respond to inspection deficiencies within the timelines outlined in the inspection report will result in the following escalation path:

1. An automated “REMINDER” email will be sent by the Inspection Management System to the inspection team for all deficiencies with a reminder that they are past due for inspection response and corrective action. This email will repeat until a response is received.
2. A “SECOND NOTICE” email, for critical deficiencies only, will be sent by HSRM staff to the inspection team, copying the Safety Committee Chair, and Department Head/Center Director, to remind the work area of their requirement and to note that failure will result in action by department leadership.

3. A “THIRD AND FINAL NOTICE” email will be sent to inspection team, copying the Safety Committee Chair, and Department Head/Center Director that the critical issue needs to be fixed immediately, and an in-person follow up may result.
  - a. Note: College/Department/Center leadership must determine final consequences.

### **Alternate Workplace Inspection Programs**

Individual departments may elect to develop their own inspection program under the following conditions:

- Inspection frequencies are consistent with the WHR listed above
- Inspection documentation is readily available upon request
- The program is documented and maintained in partnership with a HSRM service partner
- Alternate program has been approved by Department Leadership and HSRM Workplace Safety Manager.

### **VII. REFERENCES**

ANSI Z10-2012 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems [Approach to Establishing Chemical Hazard Levels - American Chemical Society](#)