



Port of Houston Authority achieves ISO 28000 certification for security efforts

One of the world's largest ports, the Port of Houston ranks first in the US for foreign waterborne tonnage and second for total tonnage. In 2002, it became the first US port to attain ISO 14001 certification for its environmental management programme. Six years later, it has become the first port authority in the world to attain ISO 28000:2007 certification for security.



by Wade Battles

Wade Battles was named Managing Director of the Port of Houston Authority in June 1999. He oversees all of the port's administrative and operational departments.

A long-time maritime professional who began his career in United States Virgin Islands as a stevedore and vessel agent, Mr. Battles has been an active member of numerous industry associations, including the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA). He was recently reappointed to the US National Maritime Security Advisory Committee.

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PHA sees its ISO 28000 certification as a validation of its attention to US Coast Guard regulations.

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As the world's first port authority to earn ISO 28000:2007 certification, the Port of Houston Authority (PHA) achieved an important distinction in the area of supply chain security management this year.



The Port of Houston is one of the busiest in the US. The process of achieving ISO 28000 certification helped PHA to shape a set of policies and procedures geared toward developing a more secure port that is staffed by highly trained personnel.



A comprehensive, third-party audit of our security management system, confirming through the certification process that it is compliant with the ISO standard, gives us international recognition. It sets us apart from other ports that are not certified and forces us to standardize our policies and procedures.

It gives us a framework on which to build toward continual improvement in our security systems and the strengthening of our relationships with our shippers and security partners.

“This certification validates not only the PHA's attention to US Coast Guard regulations,” says PHA Chairman James T. Edmonds, “but also that we have gone beyond the requirements, while still

ensuring the efficient movement of commerce.”

The certification follows an earlier ISO standard achievement. In 2002, the PHA was the first US port to attain environmental ISO 14001 certification for its environmental management system.

Although the standards are significantly different, the experience of the PHA Environmental Affairs Department allowed the PHA to implement ISO 28000 more efficiently, using the lessons learned from the implementation of ISO 14001, most notably, in the areas of communication and documentation of the programme.

ISO 28000 and ISO 14001 project managers collaborate to communicate their programmes jointly to port stakeholders. They work closely together in training, implementation of improvements and reaching out to stakeholders.

New standard

The process of achieving certification to this new standard for security helped PHA to shape a set of policies and procedures geared toward developing a more secure port that is staffed

by highly trained personnel. ISO 28000:2007 specifies those security aspects critical to security assurance of the supply chain. PHA Port Police and the perimeter security systems at Barbours Cut and Bayport terminals were certified to the standard.

Four years ago, the Port Police, the Security Management System (SMS) Advisory Group and PHA senior management began to work together to attain the ISO standard. Achieving this landmark recognition was an extensive exercise in self-



examination, critical analysis, uniformity and ambitious goal setting.

“The ISO standard offered an opportunity to refine the details of the security system at the port – to identify weaknesses and implement improved controls for their mitigation,” says PHA’s Patricia Ramsey, SMS Project Manager.

It was a testimony to solid teamwork that much of this work was achieved through work groups. Starting from an operational control perspective, nearly a year was focused on documenting processes and procedures, detailing beat descriptions, specifying work instructions and the standardization of police and security forms – a refining of internal documentation and numerous process improvements.

“The most important resource used for the project was the support and guidance of senior management as well as the SMS Advisory Group and other subject matter experts within the Port of Houston Authority,” says Mr. Ramsey. “In addition, a technical writer was employed on the project to assist in document control and records management.”

Work groups were established to develop streamlined processes and procedures and to brainstorm solutions and programmes. For example, an SMS Objectives Work Group, made up of representatives from pertinent departments

(police, fire, security, legal, engineering, management information systems) brainstormed objectives and targets for presentation to the senior management, who selected from the list. The work group then developed programmes and timelines to support these objectives and targets. Responsibilities to meet the targets are shared across interdepartmental lines.

Four objectives

Continual improvement is one of the cornerstone goals of the ISO standard, and with that in mind, PHA senior managers targeted four objectives:

- *Emergency response planning* – A comprehensive emergency response plan, which includes environmental, safety, security and first responders, is being developed to include all current emergency response plans into one document. A consultant is being employed to facilitate the project.
- *Equipment management* – Framed within six-to-eight-month project times, the team is documenting inventory, instructions in the use and protocol associated with radios, vehicles, uniforms, weapons management and qualifications, as well as improvements required.
- *Entry processing times of visitors and vendors* – Documentation was in place at Bayport and Barbours

Cut terminals as a component of more detailed programmes. The goal is to improve security while at the same time reducing by 20 to 40 % the processing times through implementation of an electronic visitor and vendor management system.

document the system in the language of the ISO standard and to identify and develop the required improvements.

Since the PHA had previously attained ISO 14001 certification for its environmental stewardship, the assistance of the PHA EMS project



Six years after obtaining ISO 14001 certification, PHA has attained ISO 28000 certification for security.

- *Training of PHA personnel with security duties* – While Port Police officers have the required training to maintain their State police officer certification, one of the features of the new SMS is the cross-training of emergency responders, support groups and others with security duties. There are additional goals to improve port-specific training for police officers and dispatchers and to improve and enhance maritime domain awareness.

When the project began, the PHA already had in place a robust security management system. The challenge was to

manager was instrumental in understanding the language of the ISO 28000 standard and translating the generic requirements to the specific context of the PHA.

**ISO 28000 gives us
a framework for continual
improvement**

In order for personnel at all levels of the PHA to understand the ISO standard, SMS awareness training was implemented for more than 300 PHA employees, tenants and stakeholders. They included Port Police and security

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guards, as well as the marine department, operations, maintenance and administration at Barbours Cut and Bayport terminals.

Training was specifically targeted to identified groups according to their level of security duties and included an explanation of the ISO process, standard and requirements for certification as well as their place in the layered security management system. This training resulted not only in increased awareness, but also greater understanding of individual roles in the interdepartmental responsibilities and improved daily compliance.

ISO 28000 and ISO 14001 project managers collaborate

Comparing the PHA security management system to the ISO standard allowed for exposure of both the strengths and weaknesses in the system. This allowed the opportunity to further document strong programmes and to initiate continual improvements in the security management system during the process

In mid-2007, members began work on the core part of the SMS documentation. Basing its SMS on current process and procedures, the team examined and developed ways to improve upon those policies and procedures. Guided by frequent senior



Chuck Russo, President of ABS Quality Evaluations, presents PHA Chairman Jim Edmonds and a group of key PHA employees who were involved in PHA's Security Management System effort with the official ISO 28000 certificate on 25 March 2008. From left: Wade Battles, PHA Managing Director; Jerry Simon, Facilities Security Officer, Turning Basin; Gil Thompson, Assistant Chief of Port Police; Patricia Ramsey, SMS Representative/Project Manager and Administrative Manager, Port Police; PHA Chairman Jim Edmonds; Chuck Russo, of ABS; Daniel Foster, Facilities Security Officer, Barbours Cut and Bayport terminals; and H. Thomas Kornegay, PHA Executive Director.

management reviews, PHA was ready for certification in early 2008.

The port authority passed the independent audit by ABS Quality Evaluations and received high praise from ABS president Chuck Russo.

“We were impressed with the robustness of the Port of Houston Authority's management system and the significant effort the port (authority) has put in to achieve this,” said Mr. Russo.

Proper balance

Increased cooperation and understanding between departments has resulted in improved security processes and compliance and improved documentation and training on procedures.

Now that the ISO 28000 has been established, maintenance and continual improvement is under way. Meeting the SMS objectives are a priority for the entire port authority. As the ISO 28000 is established and successfully maintained, additional terminals will be added to the certification process.

Implementation of ISO 28000 was highly beneficial to the PHA. ISO 28000 encourages a deeper level of commitment to the everyday details of the SMS. Numerous improvements were made during the implementation of the ISO 28000 and continual improvement is now a part of the mindset of Port Police and other security stakeholders.

The initial ISO 28000 certification is a significant first step. Because of the requirement for continual improvement, re-certification will be more difficult because the bar is always being raised. While the port authority welcomes the challenge, it must be careful to coordinate the strengthening and growth of its security programme with PHA's primary operational mission of moving cargo and facilitating commercial growth.

ISO 28000 encourages a deeper level of commitment

We must find the proper balance between expediting commerce and ensuring security. ISO 28000 certification means that we not only meet the requirements of MTSA (The Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002), but that we go above and beyond those requirements. ●

