

Shift handover checklist

For control rooms and 24/7 operations in energy, power, oil and gas, utilities and the process industries

A good handover has three parts. The outgoing shift prepares. Both shifts talk it through, face to face. Then the incoming shift checks what they have been told before taking responsibility. Use this checklist at each handover, or to review how handover works on your site.

Adapt it to your site and agree changes through your local procedure. For each item, enter C (checked), N/A (not applicable) or F (follow-up). Checked means the information has been reviewed and understood, not that the work is complete. Record each F in the handover record with an owner and next action.

Start with the basics, then go digital

Software is only part of the answer. Good handover depends on clear procedures, enough time and a shared understanding of what must be passed on. This checklist is a starting point to get the basics right.

Allow extra time and checks when

- maintenance or permit work runs over the shift change
- safety systems have been overridden or inhibited
- the plant is starting up, shutting down or running outside normal conditions
- someone is returning after a long absence
- an experienced person is handing over to someone less experienced

Agree the extra checks and support, involving the supervisor where required.

From HSE (HSG48, HSG256) and the Energy Institute.

DATE _____ SHIFT _____ AREA / UNIT _____ HANDOVER RECORD REF _____

1 Before handover: prepare

OUTGOING SHIFT

- ☐ Keep the logbooks up to date during the shift, so the handover is not written in the last ten minutes.
- ☐ Review the shift's logbook entries and pick out what the incoming shift needs to know.
- ☐ Check the current status of open work, permits and actions before you summarise them.
- ☐ Write down anything you were told by phone, radio or in passing, and include updates from field operators, maintenance and contractors.
- ☐ Note whether this is a higher-risk handover (see the box above). If it is, write more detail and allow more time.
- ☐ Allow enough time, including time to prepare, and a place free from distractions. Plan an overlap so handover is not rushed.

3 Safety: permits, isolations, overrides and alarms

- ☐ Permits to work: live, suspended or waiting to be signed off, and where each job has got to. Leave work in progress in a state you can explain.
- ☐ Isolations in place, and any due to be removed or reinstated.
- ☐ Overrides, inhibits, bypasses and defeated trips in place, who authorised them, the extra precautions in place and when they are due to be removed.
- ☐ Critical alarms during the shift and the action taken, standing, shelved or suppressed alarms, and alarms that keep repeating.
- ☐ Safety systems, fire and gas or emergency equipment that is impaired or under test.
- ☐ Who is working on the plant: contractors, field operators, lone workers and confined space entries.

2 Plant status and equipment out of service

- ☐ Current state of each unit or area: running, load or rate, any limits in place, and what has changed since the last shift.
- ☐ Equipment out of service, unavailable or on standby, why, and when it is expected back.
- ☐ Product movements and transfers in progress or planned, and duty and standby changes made during the shift.
- ☐ Temporary instructions, standing orders and temporary modifications in force, and when they expire.
- ☐ Readings, trends or unreliable instruments being watched, the next check, and what to do if things get worse.
- ☐ Planned changes for the next shift: start-ups, shutdowns, changeovers, tests or deliveries.

4 Open actions and tasks

- ☐ Open actions, with an owner, status and due time for each.
- ☐ Tasks that need doing early in the next shift: checks, samples, rounds.
- ☐ Rounds or checks not completed this shift, and why.
- ☐ Defects found during the shift, and whether a work request has been raised.
- ☐ Anything waiting on another team: maintenance, engineering, a contractor or another site.
- ☐ Items carried forward from earlier shifts: check they are still current, do not just copy them forward.

5 Deviations, incidents and abnormal events

- ☐ Trips, upsets or abnormal running during the shift, and the current position.
- ☐ Incidents, near misses and injuries, and whether they have been reported.
- ☐ Operating limits exceeded or procedures departed from, and what was done about it.
- ☐ Investigations or follow-up the next shift needs to know about.
- ☐ Anything that does not look right but has not been explained yet.

7 Communication: the handover itself

BOTH SHIFTS

- ☐ Hand over face to face where you can, at the agreed time and place.
- ☐ Incoming shift reads the logbook first. Then go through the written record together, so what is said and what is written match.
- ☐ Cover safety-critical and abnormal items first.
- ☐ Explain why, not only what: the reason behind an instruction or a concern.
- ☐ Incoming shift asks questions and repeats back the key points in their own words. Outgoing shift confirms they have been understood.
- ☐ If face to face is not possible, talk by phone or radio and still go through the written record. If interrupted, recheck the critical points.

6 Environmental and compliance

- ☐ Emissions, discharges or releases, and any limits approached or exceeded.
- ☐ Monitoring or analyser equipment out of service.
- ☐ Spills, leaks, odour or noise complaints, and what has been done.
- ☐ Notifications to regulators or authorities made, or still due.
- ☐ Readings, samples or records still outstanding for compliance.

8 After handover: check and take over

INCOMING SHIFT

- ☐ Check the key points against screens, the alarm list and permit and isolation records. Physical checks are done by authorised people under your procedures.
- ☐ Walk the plant or visit areas with significant work or abnormal conditions, if needed.
- ☐ Raise any gaps or doubts before the outgoing person leaves site. Where permits continue, sign to continue them as your permit system requires.
- ☐ Accept responsibility only when you are satisfied, and record who handed over, who accepted and when.
- ☐ If you are too tired to take over safely, say so before you accept.
- ☐ Confirm priorities for the shift and who to contact on shift for support.
- ☐ Feed back anything that was missed, so the handover checklist or procedure can be improved.

If the handover cannot be completed

If safety-critical information is missing, conflicting or not understood, escalate to the supervisor before accepting, and follow your procedure on who stays in control. Handover sign-off does not authorise work to restart, an isolation to be removed or equipment to return to service.

Sign-off

ROLE	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE AND TIME
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Handed over by

Accepted by

Why it matters

Piper Alpha, 1988. The Cullen Report found that failure of information transmission at shift handover was one of many factors (HSE).

Texas City, 2005. The US Chemical Safety Board found no policy for shift communication or shift turnover. An instruction given by phone was not in the logbook, and operators had worked 12-hour shifts for 29 or more days in a row.

Sources

- [HSE: Shift handover](#)
- [HSE human factors toolkit: Safety critical communications](#)
- [HSE: Reducing error and influencing behaviour \(HSG48\)](#)
- [HSE: Managing shift work \(HSG256\)](#)
- [US CSB: BP Texas City investigation report \(2007\), section 3.2](#)
- [HSE: Permit-to-work systems \(HSG250\)](#)

General guidance only. It does not replace your site's procedures, permit-to-work system or legal duties.



An electronic shift logbook like Opralog keeps your logbooks, open actions and handover together in one place, on your own servers or your private Azure or AWS environment.

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