



## Exceptional risk management in a highly regulated industry

Asbestos removal is a highly-specialised and dangerous business, and it's OCS Environmental Services' speciality. Because of this danger, the profession is tightly-regulated, which means their risk management system has to be second to none - and that's why we're proud to have them as a HANDS HQ client. We caught up with Paul Walsh, Head of HSQE...

### Customer story



OCS Environmental Services are a leader in providing highly specialised environmental services across all public and private industry sectors.

### The problem: insulating against error

Few industries ever have the health and safety challenges that OCS' employees face every day. The asbestos engineers on site need accurate risk assessments to avoid contamination, given the long-term lethality of exposure. Around 2,500 people died in 2005 from the after-effects of asbestos contamination, with insulation workers and strippers as the highest risk professions. Yet the company had a major problem. "It was inconsistent, the way that the risk assessments were being produced," says Walsh. "Important information was being deleted, headers that were actually based on legal requirements. Some people would start being a bit artistic and alter the way the actual RAMS looked, to try and make it more attractive, probably to their clients more than to the guys on the sites."

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Yet the Health and Safety Executive are very prescriptive about the format of every asbestos removal RAMS. Though OCS were ISO-accredited, they wanted to ensure that their internal systems were the highest standard that they could be, partially because they have to reapply for their asbestos removal license every year. "If we don't produce the correct type of RAMS with the right information, then that could affect our licence." Losing their license would be disastrous - possibly the end of their business.

The process was slow, too, with the contract managers taking 1-2 days to produce each RAMS document. And the peer-checking system that had been put in place simply wasn't being followed. An internal audit showed that the majority of documents didn't conform to procedure.

## The solution: HANDS HQ

Walsh was tasked with finding a solution to cover the whole of the UK, which would restrict structural alterations to any RAMS documents and ensure that the review process was more structured and controlled. At a dead end, he received a call from HANDS HQ out of the blue. “You must have been psychic.” he says. “It was weird...”

HANDS HQ had exactly the features Walsh needed. The built-in approval and notification system was welcomed wholeheartedly.

“With this feature now, we’re informed automatically as soon as they send it for approval and we can quality check it.” And the contract managers were especially delighted to have a restricted user-editing system to keep their RAMS documents legally compliant.

Walsh also singled out two other elements for praise. He was extremely pleased with HANDS HQ support, saying the help team were “very good at listening and trying to resolve any issues in a timely fashion”. And he was pleased that the team was happy to customise the documentation for no extra charge. “It’s not, ‘There you go. That’s all you’re getting.’ You’re willing to listen and to evolve the document.”

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“That said, moving to any new system is challenging, especially one so core to a firm’s day-to-day business and there were grumbles. But HANDS HQ soon won those staff over. “Some people, because they’re not IT literate, really thought it was going to be something daunting. But the guys who are IT literate just took to it like water and then, the other guys just came along because they realized that, it wasn’t that hard...They’re very happy, really. There’s been a big turnaround on it.”

With HANDS HQ, OCS Environmental has managed to turn a failing, slow RAMS process into one that’s HSE-compliant and easy for all their staff to use. In an industry as dangerous as asbestos management, that extra care could save lives.

**Find out how HANDS HQ can help your business**

**020 7754 0487 [help@handshq.com](mailto:help@handshq.com)**

**[www.handshq.com](http://www.handshq.com)**