Sentivo HSE Consultancy

November 2026 | Issue 02

Sentivo Safety Brief

Verified QHSE news for Saudi Arabia and the GCC, with what it means on site.

In this issue

Saudi fitness exams: existing staff are next

The roll-out in three phases

ISO 45001: the draft vote has closed

Incident lesson: the floor that was taken away

A medical exam is not a control

Toolbox checklist: floor holes and openings

How this brief is checked

Every fact is traced to its original source — a ministry, regulator, official gazette, court record or standards body — and checked on 26 October 2026. The full source list is at the end.

Saudi Arabia

Occupational fitness exams: new hires first, existing staff next

Saudi Arabia's Occupational Fitness and Non-Communicable Diseases Examinations Regulation was published in the official gazette, Umm Al-Qura, on 24 October 2025. Under its final article it took effect 180 days later, on 22 April 2026. It applies to employees of public entities, private establishments and non-profit organisations, whatever their contract.

180	8+	30	10
days from publication to entry into force	weeks of medical leave triggers a return-to-work exam	days for a worker to object to a result	years minimum to keep the occupational health record

The regulation covers more than a medical at the start of employment. A fitness examination is also required after a work injury, on return from medical leave of more than eight consecutive weeks, when there is doubt about a worker's ability to work safely, when a job requires periodic checks,

and when a worker's job, work environment or equipment changes. Workers exposed to long-latency agents such as asbestos or ionising radiation are also examined on retirement.

Examinations are run by a team led by an occupational medicine specialist accredited by the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties. The employer must provide the resources for them.

Three possible results

Fit to work May do the job they were nominated for	**Fit with restrictions** May do the job, provided the stated restrictions or considerations are followed
Unfit to work May not do that job. The employer must try to find suitable alternative work	**Objections** Within 30 days, to an independent committee at the NCOSH secretariat, which decides within 15 days

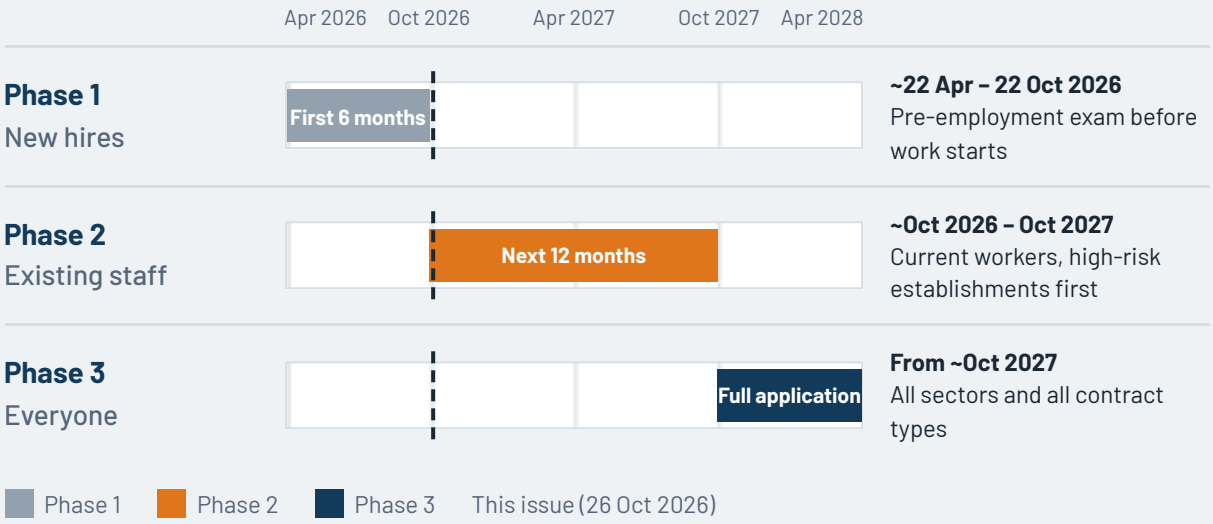
One rule matters for every HR and HSE team: the employer may not see medical details. It receives only the final fitness decision and any restrictions. The health record is kept for at least 10 years after the last examination or 5 years after employment ends, whichever is longer — and for workers exposed to long-latency agents, at least 30 years after the work ends and until the worker reaches 75.

What to do on site now

- Check that every person hired since 22 April 2026 had a pre-employment examination and was cleared before starting work.
- Plan examinations for your existing workforce now. When screening extends to current staff, the Ministry's implementation guide gives priority to high-risk establishments.
- Build the triggers into your procedures: after an injury, after more than eight weeks' medical leave, and when a job, work environment or equipment changes.
- Agree with HR how you will handle "unfit" and "fit with restrictions" results, including alternative work, without asking for the diagnosis.

The roll-out in three phases

Phase lengths are from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development's implementation guide, as reported in June 2026. The guide counts them from the date the regulation took effect; the calendar dates below are Sentivo's calculation from that date. Confirm your timing with the Ministry.



The guide also has employers submit results through an approved electronic system, with employers connected to it in the second phase. In practice, the six-month window for new hires is now closing, and screening of existing workers is the next step.

Standards update

ISO 45001: the draft vote has closed. The new edition has not.

Last month we reported that the revision of ISO 45001 was at draft (DIS) stage. The 12-week international ballot on that draft has now closed. ISO's project page records the close of voting on 9 September 2026, and the result had not been published when we checked.

Stage	Status	Date
Committee draft	**Completed**	Consultation July – September 2025; approved for the DIS stage on 14 April 2026.
DIS ballot	**Voting closed**	Opened 16 June 2026 for 12 weeks; voting closed 9 September 2026.
Next step	**Awaiting decision**	ISO lists three possible routes: approve the draft to go forward as a final draft (FDIS), hold a new DIS ballot, or refer it back to the committee.

Stage	Status	Date
Publication	**Expected**	ISO expects the new edition to replace ISO 45001:2018 in the first half of 2027.

> **Still true:** ISO 45001:2018, with Amendment 1:2024 on climate action, is the standard you are certified and audited against. Be cautious of anything sold as meeting an "ISO 45001:2026" or "2027" edition until ISO publishes it.

Incident lesson

The floor that was taken away

A UK construction company has been fined £120,000 after a carpenter fell through a first floor that was being stripped out around him. Refurbishment and fit-out teams across the GCC face the same hazard every time a floor is opened up.

In August 2022 the 59-year-old carpenter was replacing rotten floor joists in a house in Gloucestershire. Other workers were removing floorboards in the same area at the same time. Large parts of the floor had been stripped back, leaving open gaps between joists, and some joists were missing or not secured. He fell to the concrete ground floor, suffered severe head injuries and died in hospital the next day.

What was missing Measures to stop people reaching the parts of the floor that had been stripped	**What made it worse** Others kept removing boards nearby, creating new openings while he worked
Company Fined £120,000 plus £5,247 costs, 24 Sep 2026, for breaching Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005	**After the incident** HSE served a Prohibition Notice. The company then fitted joists from below and kept people off the first floor

Lessons for your sites

- **A floor being stripped is work at height.** Once boards and joists come out, an ordinary floor becomes an edge with a drop below it. Plan it as work at height from the start.
- **Don't open the floor around someone.** Sequence the work so one team is not removing flooring where another is working.
- **Close off what you open.** Stop access to stripped areas, or protect every opening, before work continues.
- **Work from below where you can.** That is the method the company adopted afterwards: fitting joists from below with suitable access equipment, with the floor above closed off.

Falls from height accounted for over a quarter of all work-related deaths in Great Britain in 2025/26, according to HSE.

Also from recent UK cases

£4 million: a "spotter" is not a control

An electrical wholesaler was fined £4 million plus £6,304 costs on 16 October 2026. A worker acting as a spotter was crushed when an unsecured 231 kg switchboard load fell from a forklift being used to load a lorry; he now needs round-the-clock care. There was no risk assessment or lift plan. The load could have been secured to the forklift, or lifted with the lorry's own crane using its welded lifting eyes. HSE called using workers to steady moving loads an unsafe and unnecessary system of work. Routine loading needs a lift plan too.

Technical focus

A medical exam is not a control

As fitness examinations become routine, there is a risk of treating "the worker passed his medical" as if it made the job safe. The new Saudi regulation rules that out. Article 8 says the occupational fitness examination may not be used as a substitute for individual or collective protective measures, and may not be relied on as the sole basis for protecting a worker.

The regulation allows two uses in support of prevention: checking whether control measures are working, by comparing results with measured exposure levels, and supporting decisions to adopt new or stronger preventive measures. The employer remains responsible for a safe workplace.

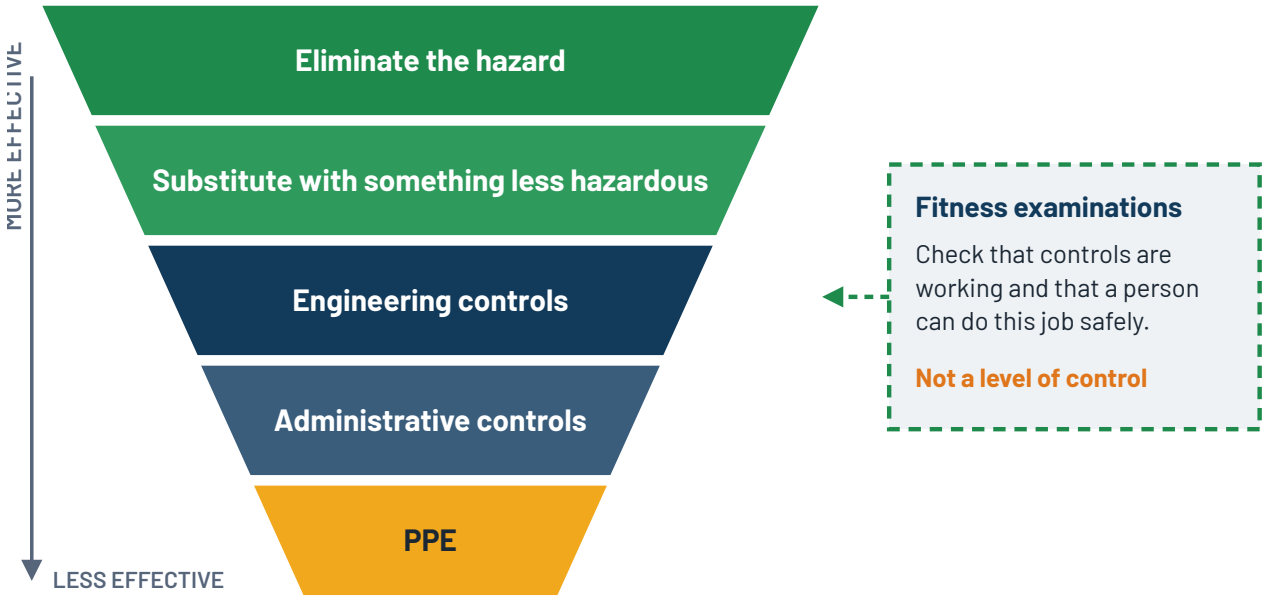


Illustration: Sentivo. The hierarchy of controls, based on ISO 45001:2018, clause 8.1.2 (simplified labels). Fitness examinations sit outside it: they check the controls, they do not replace any level.

What a fitness exam can do

- Confirm a person can do a specific job safely, with or without restrictions
- Pick up early signs that exposure controls are not working
- Support a decision to strengthen controls

What it cannot do

- Remove or reduce a hazard
- Replace guarding, ventilation, isolation or PPE
- Make an unsafe job acceptable because the worker is "fit"

Toolbox talk

Floor holes and openings: five checks

Five checks for a pre-start briefing on any floor, roof or deck with holes or openings — including those created during strip-out. Figures are from US OSHA's construction fall-protection standard (29 CFR 1926 Subpart M), a widely used benchmark. Where your project specification or local code is stricter, follow that.

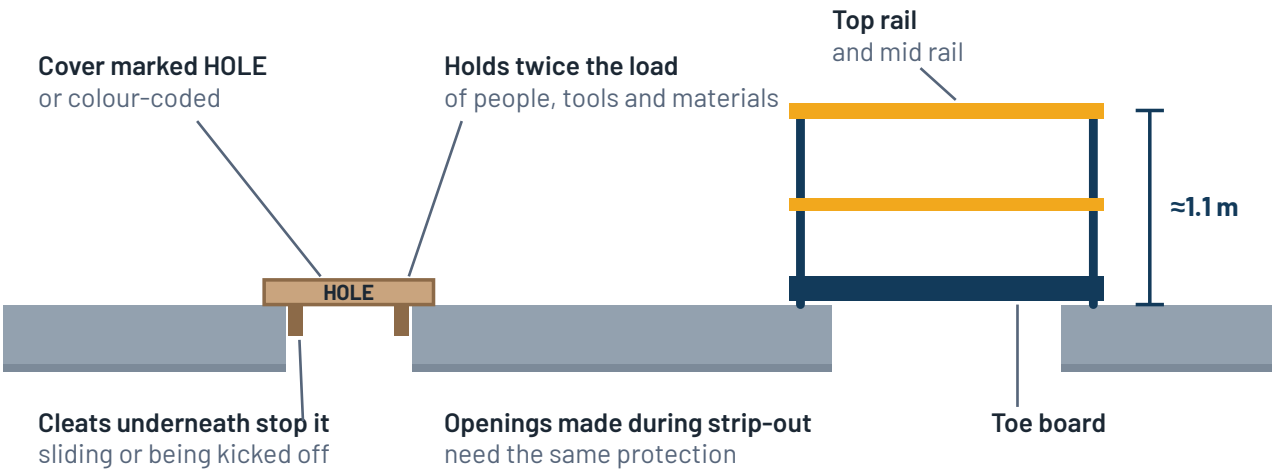


Illustration: Sentivo. A floor hole closed with a secured, marked cover (left) and an opening protected by a guardrail (right).

- [ ] **Every hole is found and protected.** OSHA treats any gap of 5 cm (2 in) or more as a hole. Where there is a drop of more than 1.8 m (6 ft), protect people from falling through with a cover, guardrail or fall arrest; covers also stop people stepping or tripping into holes.
  OSHA 1926.500(b); 1926.501(b)(4)(i)–(ii)

- [ ] **Covers are strong enough.** At least twice the weight of the people, equipment and materials that may be on them at once. Covers in roads and vehicle aisles must take at least twice the maximum axle load of the largest vehicle expected.
  OSHA 1926.502(i)(1)–(2)

- [ ] **Covers are fixed in place.** Secured when installed so wind, equipment or people cannot move them by accident.
  OSHA 1926.502(i)(3)

- [ ] **Covers are marked.** Colour-coded, or marked with the word "HOLE" or "COVER", to warn of the hazard.
  OSHA 1926.502(i)(4)

- [ ] **Guardrails are the right height and strength.** Top rail 1.1 m (42 in), plus or minus 8 cm, able to withstand 890 N (200 lb) applied near the top edge in any outward or downward direction.
  OSHA 1926.502(b)(1), (b)(3)

From Sentivo

The Sentivo QHSE Maturity Index is live

Zero incidents last year does not prove a strong system. Our free self-assessment asks 30 questions across six domains mapped to ISO 45001 clauses 5–10, places your organisation on a five-level scale from Reactive to Leading, and gives three priority actions to reach the next level. It takes about 10 minutes.

Try it at sentivoconsultancy.com/qhse-maturity-index, and visit sentivoconsultancy.com for our training material and QHSE templates.

Sources

All sources checked on 26 October 2026.

1. Umm Al-Qura (official gazette), Occupational Fitness and Non-Communicable Diseases Examinations Regulation, published 24 Oct 2025, Article 21 on entry into force — uqn.gov.sa
2. National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (NCOSH), Occupational Fitness & Non-communicable Diseases Examinations Regulation, English text (Articles 1, 3, 4, 8, 13, 14, 17) — ncosh.gov.sa
3. Saudi Press Agency, "Human Resources Minister Launches Occupational Fitness and Non-Communicable Diseases Examinations Regulation", 8 Sep 2025 — spa.gov.sa
4. Okaz (Arabic), MHRSD guide: fitness examinations for all workers in three phases, 20 Jun 2026 — okaz.com.sa
5. KPMG, GMS Flash Alert 2026-165, Saudi Arabia occupational fitness screening phases, 26 Jun 2026 — kpmg.com
6. ISO, ISO/DIS 45001 project page (stage 40.60, close of voting, 9 Sep 2026; expected publication) — iso.org
7. ISO/TC 283, "ISO 45001 Revision Reaches Draft International Standard Ballot Stage", Jun 2026 — committee.iso.org
8. UK Health and Safety Executive, "Construction company fined £120,000 after worker dies in fall from height", 2 Oct 2026 — press.hse.gov.uk
9. UK Health and Safety Executive, "Electrical wholesaler fined £4million after worker's crush injuries mean he now needs 24/7 care", 16 Oct 2026 — press.hse.gov.uk
10. US OSHA, 29 CFR 1926.500 Scope, application and definitions (definition of "hole") — osha.gov
11. US OSHA, 29 CFR 1926.501 Duty to have fall protection, (b)(4) holes — osha.gov
12. US OSHA, 29 CFR 1926.502 Fall protection systems criteria and practices, (b) guardrails and (i) covers — osha.gov
13. ISO 45001:2018, Occupational health and safety management systems — Requirements with guidance for use, clause 8.1.2 Eliminating hazards and reducing OH&S risks
14. Sentivo Consultancy, QHSE Maturity Index — sentivoconsultancy.com

© 2026 Sentivo HSE Consultancy. This brief summarises public information for awareness only. It is not legal advice — always check the current text of a regulation or standard before relying on it.