

# Clarification on Legal Compliance with National Health and Safety Requirements for GSTC Certification

Important Notice for Stakeholders, Accredited CBs, and GSTC Auditors

25 September 2025

GSTC Accreditation Division

## 1 For Public Overview

GSTC Standards require robust health, safety, and legal compliance, including in Hotels/Accommodation, Tour Operators, Destinations, MICE, and Attractions (hereafter, all relevant scopes). This document explains the meaning of legal compliance with health and safety management for GSTC certification.

- The GSTC standard applies to all relevant areas but does not replace specific legal or regulatory requirements of individual countries.
- To achieve GSTC Certification, an audit must be conducted to check the legal compliance in health and safety management, supported by documentary evidence. This means that GSTC auditors will check for the existence and accessibility of the necessary legal documents related to health and safety management, as well as assess staff awareness of these requirements.
- The GSTC audit does not replace on-site health and safety inspections. While the primary method of evaluation is through document review, GSTC auditors may also verify staff awareness through interviews and may observe visible safety elements, such as evacuation routes, during site tours.

### 1.1 What legal compliance with health and safety management covers

- **Legal and regulatory alignment:** Maintaining an up-to-date list of all applicable laws and regulations affecting health and safety.
- **Evidence of compliance:** Retaining certificates and other documentation that meet these legal requirements.

- **Staff awareness:** Ensuring relevant staff are aware of the legislation that applies to their activities.

## **1.2 What this means in practice**

- A comprehensive risk management approach to protect guests, staff, and contractors across all functions.
- Documented procedures, checklists, and the designated teams or personnel responsible for preventing and mitigating health and safety risks.
- Ongoing training and routine inspections of safety equipment.
- Regular reviews of health and safety management, including emergency plans and emergency response procedures for facilities and activities.

Ensuring compliance with national health and safety regulations is an integral requirement for all GSTC-certified\* entities. This clarification is issued to ensure consistent understanding of the applicable legal obligations across all GSTC certification scopes.

*\*Note: The term “GSTC-certified” is a shorthand for “Certified by a Certification Body that is GSTC-accredited.”*

## **2 For Accredited Certification Bodies (ACB) and GSTC Auditors**

### **2.1 Subject**

Legal Compliance with Health & Safety in the Certification of Hotels/Accommodation (H/A), Tour Operators (TO), Destinations, MICE, and Attractions (Hereafter, all relevant scopes)

### **2.2 Scope and objectives**

Purpose: To verify, via document review, that the organization maintains and demonstrates legal compliance and basic health and safety readiness as part of legal compliance across all relevant scopes.

Scope includes:

- Up-to-date compilation of all applicable legal requirements (local, national, international) relevant to all relevant scopes
- Documentation proving compliance with these requirements (certificates, regulatory approvals, permits, etc.).
- Evidence that staff responsible for specific roles are aware of the legislation related to their duties across all sectors.
- Where applicable, verification of legal permissions for core business activities (all relevant scopes).

Auditors verify the existence, relevance, and currency of documents but do not evaluate engineering adequacy, structural design, or detailed occupational safety inspections, which remain under national authorities.

### **2.3 Audit approach**

**Primary method:** Document check, records verification, interview, and onsite visits.

- The current master list of applicable legal requirements and associated files for each sector is as follows:
  - Certificates, licenses, and regulatory documents showing compliance.
  - Records demonstrating staff awareness of the relevant legislation (training records, communications, role-specific briefs).
  - Notes on legal permissions for core business activities.
  - This does not constitute a full occupational health and safety inspection, which may be addressed separately.

The GSTC Standards do not intend to replace country-specific legal/regulatory requirements, and audits under this scope primarily use document verification. GSTC auditors may also verify staff awareness through interviews and may observe visible safety elements (e.g., evacuation routes) during site tours. On-site health and safety performance may be addressed through separate processes or future evaluations.

## **2.4 Notes for ACBs and Auditors**

- Emphasize that the audit confirms the existence and currency of documentation, not the execution quality of all health and safety practices on-site.
- Confirm alignment with applicable country laws and regulations beyond the GSTC requirements for each sector.
- Request documentation samples from each category (legal register, certificates, training logs, role-based awareness materials) to efficiently verify the scope.

If auditors encounter obvious and immediate risks (e.g., blocked fire exits), they may record these as observations for reporting purposes. However, auditors must not act as safety inspectors; responsibility for enforcement remains with the enterprise and national/local authorities.