



TITLE: PCI Certification Process in Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak

DOC: MSC-P1120

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PREPARED BY: Quality Systems Manager

APPROVED BY: Managing Quality Director

## 1. INTRODUCTION

PCI has established the course of action described in this document in response to the extraordinary events and circumstances related to the COVID-19 outbreak. The following procedures were developed under the guidelines of IAF-ID-3, IAF Informative Document for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations and IAF-MD-4, IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes.

PCI's course of action considers the use of other means to obtain evidence of a plant's conformity to the PCI Plant Certification Program requirements, such as performing offsite remote auditing methods and activities that utilize information and communication technologies (ICT). This technique is referred herein as a **remote audit**.

## 2. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

- 2.1 Conformity Assessment Body (CAB):** Body that performs conformity assessment services. For the purposes of this procedure, this is PCI, also referred to as a Certification Body (CB).
- 2.2 Certification Body (CB):** Body that performs third-party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons. Certification of a management system is sometimes called registration.
- 2.3 Attestation:** Issue of a statement based on a decision following review that fulfillment of specified requirements has been demonstrated.
- 2.4 Accreditation Body (AB):** Body that performs third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks. For the purposes of this procedure, this is International Accreditation Services (IAS).
- 2.5 Extraordinary event or circumstance:** A circumstance beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as "Force Majeure" or "act of God". Examples are war, strike, riot, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crime, pandemic, flooding, earthquake, malicious computer hacking, other natural or man-made disasters.
- 2.6 Information and communication technologies (ICT):** The use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analyzing and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others. The use of ICT may be appropriate for auditing both locally and remotely.
- 2.7 Remote Audit:** Audit technique that effectively applies offsite audit methods utilizing ICT as a means to obtain evidence of a plant's conformity. Examples of remote auditing (use of ICT) may include but are not limited to:
  - Meetings; by means of teleconference facilities, including audio, video and data sharing
  - Audit of documents and records by means of remote access, either synchronously (in real time) or asynchronously (when applicable)
  - Recording of information and evidence by means of still video, video or audio recordings
  - Providing visual/audio access to remote or potentially hazardous locations

Additional definitions can be found in ISO 17021-1:2015.



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### 3. PURPOSE

**3.1** The purpose of this document is to:

- a) Define PCI's alternative, short-term methods of assessing plants to verify the continuing effectiveness of the plant's management system and to maintain certification during the COVID-19 outbreak, during a period of time when travel is restricted, and in-plant audits are not generally possible.
- b) Meet the requirements of IAF-ID-3 and IAF-ID-4 by establishing a reasonable planned course of action.
- c) Provide a path for plants to meet PCI recertification requirements.

**3.2** To meet these goals, PCI will ensure the following objectives are achieved during the administration of these procedures:

- a) Define the methodology for the use of ICT that is sufficiently flexible and non-prescriptive in nature to optimize the conventional audit process.
- b) Ensure that adequate controls are in place to avoid abuses that could compromise the integrity of the audit process.
- c) Support the principles of safety and sustainability, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- d) Proactively communicate with the affected plant.
- e) Take appropriate steps to assess the affected plant and how the plan to move forward will be communicated.

### 4. RISK ASSESSMENT

Prior to implementing this procedure, PCI shall perform an assessment of the risks unique to these procedures.

- This assessment identifies, analyzes and assesses potential risks, and provides supplemental controls PCI should use to facilitate PCI's process defined within this procedure.
- PCI must provide justification for any deviations from PCI's program requirements.
- PCI will assess the risk for continuing certification and understand the organization's current and expected future situation and gather necessary information before deciding an appropriate course of action.

### 5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

**5.1** Short-term and long-term procedures described in this document do not permanently replace PCI's regular audit program procedures.

**5.2** A plant's failure to meet the short-term and/or long-term procedures described in this document, including the continuing certification requirements, PCI Policy 20 requirements, and other PCI recertification requirements, will result in suspension or withdrawal of certification, as applicable.

**5.3** PCI will continue certification for plants by using appropriate auditing methods to obtain necessary evidence to confirm client compliance with PCI Policy 20 and the applicable Quality Standard(s).

**5.4** When developing audit plans for remote audits, the use of ICT shall be incorporated to the extent necessary to achieve the audit purpose.

**5.5** PCI Plant Quality Audits are typically unannounced audits; however, during the COVID-19 outbreak, some Plant Quality Audits may be announced, such as Special Immediate Audits, Special Audits and Remote Audits. All Remote Audits are announced audits.



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- 5.6 All regular PCI recertification and renewal procedures apply to clients while these short-term or long-term procedures are implemented during the COVID-19 outbreak. The appropriate PCI staff representative shall make the final certification decision, which includes a review of audit findings and the Client's compliance with the requirements of the certification program.
- 5.7 PCI and each client affected must agree upon a way to continue certification. To facilitate this, each client will be contacted to gather specific information.
  - a) The Client shall respond to PCI to confirm the arrangements for continuing certification, including the remote audit, audit postponement or conducting the onsite audit.
  - b) PCI will confirm receipt of the Client's response and will formally acknowledge the steps PCI and the client have agreed to take to maintain the client's certification status.
  - c) If the client fails to respond to PCI within 30 days, then PCI's normal suspension and withdrawal of certification procedures will apply.

**6. SHORT-TERM PROCEDURES (through June 30, 2020)**

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, PCI has suspended all in-plant audits in mid-March until at least May 4, 2020. This has resulted in the postponement of audits for some plants that would normally be conducted during the January to June audit cycle. The following options are applicable to plants that have not already received onsite audits during this cycle:

**6.1 Remote Audits**

- a) Only conduct remote audits for eligible clients who agree to it and have the means to accommodate the remote audit.
- b) The remote audit is to be conducted in accordance with the procedure in Appendix A.
- c) Remote Audit Eligibility Criteria
  - i. Preferably, applicants (Stage 1 and Stage 2) and newly-certified clients (certified for less than one year) would not undergo a remote audit; however, if advanced video surveillance with live feed is available, then a remote audit would be considered if the audit program objectives can be achieved.
  - ii. Some Special Audits (SA) and Special Immediate Audits (SIA) may be eligible for remote audits, when the purpose of the audit can be satisfactorily achieved through the use of ICT, pending PCI review and approval.
  - iii. Clients that need product observed because of PCI Policy 20 requirements cannot undergo remote audits, unless advanced video surveillance with live feed is available. In this case, a remote audit would be considered if the audit program objectives can be achieved.
- d) If PCI determines the client is qualified, PCI will consider the client's eligibility to undergo a Remote Audit using the Process to Determine Eligibility for a Remote Audit in section 9.

**6.2 Postpone the onsite plant audit**

- a) Postpone the on-site audit until such time as travel restrictions have been eased and other circumstances allow.
- b) Audits will be postponed when onsite observation is crucial to achieve the audit objectives.
- c) If the audit is postponed, PCI may request relevant documentation (for example, management review meeting minutes, corrective action records, results of internal audits, etc.) to be reviewed offsite to verify conformance to general quality management system requirements.



**6.3** Conduct the onsite plant audit

- a) The onsite audit can be conducted once travel restrictions have been removed and it is safe to complete the audit.
- b) If travel restrictions allow, the plant is within driving distance, and both parties agree that the onsite audit can be safely conducted, then the onsite audit can be performed. Appropriate safety measures will be agreed upon by both parties.

**7. LONG-TERM PROCEDURES (after July 1, 2020, until operations return to normal)**

For plant audits that would normally be conducted during the July to December audit cycle, the following audit options apply:

**7.1** Remote Audits

- a) Only conduct remote audits for eligible clients who agree to it and have the means to accommodate the remote audit.
- b) The remote audit is to be conducted in accordance with the procedure in Appendix A.
- c) Remote Audit Eligibility Criteria
  - i. Applicants (Stage 1 and Stage 2) and newly-certified clients (certified for less than one year) would undergo a remote audit if advanced video surveillance with live feed is available and the audit program objectives can be achieved. If the audit program objectives cannot be achieved, then an onsite audit must be performed.
  - ii. Some Special Audits (SA) and Special Immediate Audits (SIA) may be eligible for remote audits, when the purpose of the audit can be satisfactorily achieved through the use of ICT, pending PCI review and approval. If the SIA results from a failed audit, then PCI will determine the appropriate path for the plant to be eligible for continued certification.
  - iii. Clients that need product observed because of PCI Policy 20 requirements cannot undergo remote audits, unless advanced video surveillance with live feed is available. In this case, a remote audit would be considered if the audit program objectives can be achieved.
- d) If PCI determines the client is qualified, PCI will consider the client's eligibility to undergo a Remote Audit using the Process to Determine Eligibility for a Remote Audit in section 9.
- e) Remote audits shall include a virtual review of production operations and product tolerances.

**7.2** Postpone the onsite plant audit

- a) Postpone the on-site audit until such time as travel restrictions have been eased and other circumstances allow.
- b) Audits will be postponed only when onsite observation is crucial to achieve the audit objectives.
- c) If the audit is postponed, PCI will request relevant documentation (for example, management review meeting minutes, corrective action records, results of internal audits, etc.) to conduct a remote audit in accordance with section 7.1 above.

**7.3** Conduct the onsite plant audit

- a) The onsite audit can be conducted if travel restrictions have been removed and it is safe to complete the audit.
- b) If travel restrictions allow, the plant is within driving distance, and both parties agree that the onsite audit can be safely conducted, then the onsite audit can be performed. Appropriate safety measures will be agreed upon by both parties.

**7.4** PCI's plant certifications are issued annually, for the period from July 1 to June 30. The audits conducted during the July to December audit cycle are considered as the annual recertification



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audits, and the audits conducted during the January to June audit cycle are considered as the annual surveillance/follow-up audits. In the event that the corrective actions for major nonconformances resulting from the recertification audit cannot be verified, consideration will be given to extending the certification for up to six (6) months beyond the original expiry date, if sufficient evidence has been collected to provide confidence that the certified management system is effective.

- 7.5 The PCI plant certification contract allows a 6-month reinstatement period following certification expiration, for the purpose of resolving major nonconformances from the recertification audit. In the event that the resolution cannot be completed within this timeframe due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this reinstatement period may be extended for up to three months (until March 31, 2021) upon request.
- 7.6 PCI Policy 20 and ISO 17021 require that an audit be performed within the prior 12 months to be eligible for recertification. In the event an audit is not performed within the last 12 months due to the COVID-19 outbreak, then consideration will be given to extending this period to 18 months if sufficient evidence has been collected, to provide confidence that the certified management system is effective. Otherwise, the certificate will be suspended or the scope reduced.

## 8. TRANSITION BACK TO NORMAL CERTIFICATION AND AUDIT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- 8.1 The effects of the COVID-19 outbreak vary dramatically by region, state, county, city, and by other demographics; therefore, each individual plant's current and future state of operations will vary. It is anticipated that the easing of travel restrictions and other consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak will diminish at varying rates across the country. Therefore, the transition back to normal surveillance and/or recertification activities will necessarily vary.
- 8.2 To determine each plant's current and future state, PCI will analyze each plant, on a case-by-case basis, to evaluate the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 restrictions on the plant and/or PCI's ability to perform regular certification and audit activities. PCI will transition back to normal surveillance and recertification activities once the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak have subsided.
- 8.3 In case long-term procedures extend beyond the intended timeframe, clients that comply with the procedures herein, are required, at a minimum, to undergo at least one onsite audit every three years in order to maintain certification.

## 9. PROCESS TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR A REMOTE AUDIT

- 9.1 PCI will use the Remote Audit Eligibility Criteria found in the short-term procedure and long-term procedures, as applicable, to evaluate which clients are impacted and to determine their options to maintain certification. Additionally, to be eligible:
  - a) The client must have means to share files with the auditor and be available for interviews with the auditor via ICT during the remote audit.
  - b) The remote audit scope must be able to confirm the client's quality management system complies with the general quality management system requirements.
  - c) The client must be in good standing with PCI.
- 9.2 If PCI determines the client is eligible to undergo a remote audit, PCI must ensure the following:
  - a) The reason or necessity to prescribe or undergo the audit is not negatively affected by use of offsite audit activities instead of using traditional onsite audit activities.



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- b) The necessity of the offsite audit activities must assure the audit objectives would still be met before approving the utilization of remote audit activities for the client.



## Appendix A PCI Remote Audit Procedure

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The following procedures are for use in conducting remote audits for the PCI Plant Certification Program. These were developed under the guidelines of IAF-MD-4, IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes. A Remote Audit is an audit technique that effectively applies offsite audit methods utilizing ICT as a means to obtain evidence of a plant's conformity. These procedures supplement those already implemented for PCI's standard, onsite audits and are designed to preserve the integrity of the audit process.

### 2. REQUIRED COMPETENCY

- 2.1 PCI will ensure its auditors and staff utilizing ICT to perform offsite remote auditing activities have demonstrated the competencies necessary to perform the offsite remote auditing activities and achieve the desired results of the audit(s). In addition to the competencies identified in their normal job functions, this includes the ability to administer the ICT, where necessary, and to understand, interpret, and utilize the information that is provided.
- 2.2 The auditor shall also be aware of the risks and opportunities of the information and communication technologies used and the impacts that they may have on the validity and objectivity of the information gathered.

### 3. SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 The security and confidentiality of electronic or electronically-transmitted information is particularly important when using ICT for audit purposes. The use of ICT for audit purposes shall be mutually agreed upon by the client and PCI before ICT is used for audit purposes. If appropriate security and confidentiality measures cannot be implemented and agreed upon, PCI shall use other methods to conduct the audit and fulfil audit objectives.
- 3.2 Prior to utilizing ICT, PCI will verify appropriate measures are in place to ensure that security and confidentiality is maintained throughout the remote audit activities. These include, but are not limited to:
  - Limiting access to any copies of documents provided in advance of the remote audit.
  - Limiting viewing access to documents or video of production operations shared during the audit.
  - Not recording or retaining images of documents or video shared during the audit without the permission of the client.
  - Not sharing sign-in or password credentials

### 4. AUDIT DURATION

- 4.1 Audit duration of remote audits have been developed in accordance to IAF-MD-5 IAF Mandatory Document for Duration of QMS and EMS Audits. The following definitions are applicable:
  - **Duration of management system certification audits** – the audit time spent conducting audit activities from the opening meeting to the closing meeting, inclusive
  - **Audit Day** – the duration of an audit day is normally 8 hours and includes a lunch break



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#### 4.2 Remote Audit Duration Requirements

Remote audits for continuing certification clients will be 1-day audits (minimum 8 hours), including both pre-audit and audit activities, as follows:

- 1.5 hours, Audit Preparation activities (prior to planned audit date)
- 6.5 hours, Remote Audit (conducting the remote audit while the client is available)

#### 4.3 Critical Items observed in a Remote Audit

- Quality System
- Raw Materials and Accessories (records only)
- Concrete (records only)
- Reinforcement and Prestressing (records only)
- Quality Control

#### 4.4 Items typically not observed in a Remote Audit but could be observed

- Production Practices
- Raw Materials and Accessories (storage)
- Concrete (production and curing)
- Reinforcement and Prestressing (operations)
- Product Tolerances

#### 4.5 Increase Sample Plans for Remote Audit

A typical, minimum sampling plan under normal conditions is one sample per requirement. An auditor performing a remote audit will take at least two samples per requirement. If the scope of the audit is completed in less than the required audit duration, then additional samples shall be taken to conform to the audit duration requirement.

### 5. REMOTE AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR AN INITIAL CERTIFICATION AUDIT

5.1 Initial certification audits are at least 2-day audits and include a review of the management system documentation (as with a standard remote audit), as well as production operations and product in storage. It is preferred that these audits be performed onsite when possible. During periods of extraordinary events and circumstances, consideration will be given to performing these audits when there are extenuating circumstances, such as contractual obligations that cannot be delayed. Requests for these audits will be considered on a case-by-case basis, separate from the process for verifying conformance of continuing certification clients.

5.2 The decision to perform an initial certification audit via remote auditing techniques will only be approved by PCI if:

- an audit plan can be developed and implemented that will ensure client compliance with the certification requirements,
- advanced video surveillance with live feed is available, and
- the audit program objectives can be achieved.

5.3 Additional factors to be considered during possible approval of a remote audit include:

- Whether the client has other certified plants
- Whether a stage 1 audit was performed and the results of that audit
- Whether the Quality System Manual has been approved
- Whether the plant has other third-party certifications



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## 6. REMOTE AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIAL AUDITS AND SPECIAL IMMEDIATE AUDITS

- 6.1** Special audits and special immediate audits will be considered for remote audit techniques when the purpose of the audit can be satisfactorily achieved through the use of ICT, pending PCI review and approval. It is preferred that these audits be performed onsite when possible. During periods of extraordinary events and circumstances, consideration will be given to performing these audits when there are extenuating circumstances, such as contractual obligations that cannot be delayed. Requests for these audits will be considered on a case-by-case basis, separate from the process for verifying conformance of continuing certification clients.
- 6.2** The decision to perform a special audit or special immediate audit via remote auditing techniques will only be approved by PCI if:
- an audit plan can be developed and implemented that will ensure client compliance with the certification requirements,
  - the audit program objectives can be achieved, and
  - advanced video surveillance with live feed is available, when required to support meeting the audit objectives.
- 6.3** Additional factors to be considered during possible approval of a remote audit include:
- the risk of continuing certification without the special audit or special immediate audit
  - the reason for the audit
  - the approval status of the Quality System Manual

## 7. INITIAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE CLIENT

### 7.1 Initial contact

- 7.1.1** Clients whose audits have been postponed due to extraordinary events and circumstances will be contacted to confirm the postponement of the audit and determine if a remote audit is feasible. Other purposes of the initial contact are to:
- establish communications with the plant's representatives
  - confirm the authority to conduct the audit
  - provide information on the audit objectives, scope, methods and audit team composition
  - confirm the agreement with the plant regarding the extent of the disclosure and the treatment of confidential information
  - make arrangements for the audit, including scheduling the dates
  - determine any specific requirements for access and security of documents
  - agree on the attendees
  - confirm agreement to the general audit plan
- 7.1.2** To assist in evaluating the status of the plant's operations, the following questions will be used:
- Has the plant been impacted by the extraordinary event and circumstances? If so, to what extent has the operation of the plant been affected? Is the plant continuing to produce and ship precast products?
  - Has the plant been temporarily shut down? If so, is the duration known? (Has PCI been notified?)



- If the plant has been impacted, will the plant use other material suppliers for its products? If so, are these suppliers currently covered under the plant's quality system?
- If the plant has been impacted, will some of the production be subcontracted to another plant? If so, is the plant PCI certified?
- Do the plant personnel involved with the PCI audit have access to pertinent files with means to electronically share the files with PCI auditors? (See Client Requirements below)

## 7.2 Client Requirements

**7.2.1** To share files prior to the audit, the client can choose from the following ICT options:

- Web-based email
- Web-based file-share application or software
- Provide hard copies to the auditor

**7.2.2** During the audit, the client must have means to share files with the auditor and be available for interviews via ICT. To share files during the audit, the client can choose from the following ICT options:

- computer with audio and video, using web-based teleconference application or software
- telephone, smartphone or handheld devices
- facsimile

**7.2.3** To be available for interviews during the audit, the client can choose from the following ICT options:

- computer with audio and video, using web-based teleconference application or software
- telephone, smartphones, or handheld devices

**7.2.4** Preferably, the entire remote audit is conducted through web-based teleconference application or software. It is possible for a remote audit to be conducted only using facsimile and telephone, though this is the least favorable option.

**7.3** Once the review is complete, the path the client has agreed to take for continuing certification will be communicated along with the audit plan.

## 8. ACTIVITIES IN ADVANCE OF THE AUDIT

**8.1** Once agreement is reached with the client, the auditor will forward the audit plan, the audit agenda, and the list of required documents to be provided in advance. The auditor will copy PCI on this communication.

**8.2** The audit plan should cover or reference the following:

- a) the audit objectives,
- b) the audit scope, including identification of the plant, as well as processes to be audited,
- c) the audit criteria and any reference documents,
- d) the date(s), expected time and duration of audit activities to be conducted, including meetings with the plant's management,
- e) the audit will be conducted using ICT, including how the information will be accessed during the audit,
- f) advising that the audit evidence will be based on a sample of the information available,



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- g) identification of the audit team member(s) and their roles and responsibilities,
- h) identification of the plant's representative for the audit,
- i) any critical areas or times during the audit that may require additional resources,
- j) any specific measures to be taken to increase the likelihood of achieving the audit objectives, and
- k) matters related to confidentiality and information security.

**8.3** The Auditor will develop an agenda for the audit, which will be provided to the client with the audit plan.

**8.4** Typically, the audit plan is to be reviewed and accepted by the client; however, for remote audits, the client's acceptance of the audit agenda will be accepted in lieu of this requirements and any objections by the auditee to the audit plan should be resolved between the auditor, client and PCI.

**8.5** Every remote audit will include a review of the **following relevant documents and records** from the client. These documents and records are to be reviewed offsite by the auditor to determine continuing suitability of the certification. These records must be provided to the auditor sufficiently in advance to allow review prior to the remote audit. The timeframe for their submission should be agreed upon by the auditor and client during the initial communication.

**8.6** The **following relevant documents and records** must be provided:

- a) QSM or confirm current revision
- b) Project list (in-process and completed since prior audit)
- c) Most recent internal audit report
- d) QSC meeting minutes including review of audit reports
- e) Customer feedback documents
- f) List of current key personnel (organization chart)
- g) Personnel certifications
- h) Mill certificates
  - i. Rebar
  - ii. Strand
  - iii. Well water
  - iv. Cementitious materials
- i) Approved supplier list
- j) Calibrations
  - i. Stressing equipment
  - ii. Batch plant scales, admixture dispensers, and water meters
  - iii. Testing equipment (compression machine, fresh concrete testing equipment)
- k) List of any special procedures that may apply to the plant (when applicable)
- l) Any other plant specific document or record also required by PCI or the auditor (delete if not from the Agenda template, if not applicable to the specific remote audit)

**8.7 Confirming the feasibility of the audit**

**8.7.1** The auditor will confirm the feasibility of the audit on behalf of PCI, once the minimum required documents and records have been received from the client. The confirmation of feasibility should take into consideration the following factors:

- a) Is there sufficient and appropriate information for planning and conducting the audit?
- b) Is there adequate cooperation from the auditee?
- c) Are there adequate time and resources for conducting the audit?



8.7.2 Where the audit is not feasible, an alternative should be proposed to PCI, in agreement with the auditee.

## 8.8 Document Review in Preparation for the Audit

8.8.1 The required documents from the plant should be reviewed in order to:

- a) gather information to prepare audit activities and applicable work documents (audit checklists), e.g. on processes, functions
- b) establish an overview of the extent of the system documentation to detect possible gaps.
- c) ascertain if there have been any management changes quality concerns or complaints received.

8.8.2 The Auditor reviews the Client MS Manual (QSM – Quality System Manual) to gather information about client processes and evaluated whether client processes conform to PCI requirements. (MNL-116 and PCI QSM-1). Prepare the Auditor’s Checklist (MSC-F1006)

## 9. CONDUCTING THE REMOTE AUDIT

### 9.1 Equipment used during the remote audit

Remote audits will be conducted using the appropriate hardware and software. Auditors and PCI Staff must have access to the equipment necessary to accomplish the audit plan. They must also be familiar in the use of the hardware and software to be used for the purposes of remote auditing. The following is a list of commonly used hardware and software:

a) Standard Hardware

- computer with audio, video and recording capabilities, such as webcam/video camera, microphone, or wearable technology (if available)
- telephone or smartphone
- handheld devices when necessary

b) Standard Software

- web browser with security and data protection measures in compliance to current regulations (i.e. – firewalls, such as local VPN or Windows Defender)
- email with send and receive capability
- electronic file share capability (i.e. – YouSendIt or DropBox)
- Microsoft Office and Adobe Reader (required for auditors to open files)
- teleconference software or web-based applications (i.e. - GoTo Meeting, Zoom Meeting or Skype)

### 9.2 The Remote Audit Environment

As with any audit, the remote audit should be performed in an appropriate environment intended to facilitate achieving the audit plan and objectives. Additional concerns during a remote audit include:

- a) The auditor should be stationed in an area where there will be minimal background noise, distractions, and interruptions.
- b) The auditor’s computer and other equipment should be appropriately situated to provide convenient access, communication, and document viewing.
- c) Reliable internet and communication service are required.
- d) Breaks should be taken at appropriate and agreed upon intervals.



**9.3 Conducting the opening meeting**

**9.3.1** Prior to performing the audit activities, the auditor shall begin the remote audit by conducting the audit opening meeting. The auditor leads the meeting. The content and purpose of the opening meeting is similar to the opening meeting for a standard, onsite meeting, including:

- a) introducing the auditor and the plant representatives,
- b) confirming the agreement of all parties (auditee and auditor) to the audit plan, and
- c) ensuring that all planned audit activities can be performed.

**9.3.2** To achieve this, the auditor will reference the remote audit agenda and the audit plan and will confirm the agreement/reason for the remote audit. The auditor should also review any special security or confidentiality issues as they may relate to the review of the plant documents or operations. In the case of an initial certification audit that will include a virtual review of production operations and product storage, the auditor should also confirm the scope of the items to be reviewed, the timing of these operations at the plant, and the arrangements for observing these activities.

**9.3.3** The auditor should complete the Audit Opening Meeting Notes and Agreement Forms. A record of attendance at the meeting should be kept by the auditor (signatures not required).

**9.4 Collecting and verifying information**

**9.4.1** Throughout the audit, the auditor will:

- collect information, relevant to the audit objectives, scope and criteria by reviewing the client's shared files (relevant documents and records) and through interviews of attendees.
- collect information about plant production processes and products in storage using observations during live video surveillance (in the case of an initial certification audit)
- collect information about plant production processes and products in storage using observations during live video surveillance (where relevant to the audit plan, in the case of a special audit or special immediate audit)
- verify information relevant to the audit objectives, scope and criteria by interviewing the client's key personnel.
- verify conformance with the appropriate quality standards, PCI policy 20 and other relevant requirements.
- verify the plant's effective functioning of their Quality Assurance Program.

**9.4.2** Only information relevant to the audit objectives, scope and criteria, including information relating to interfaces between functions, activities and processes, should be collected by means of appropriate sampling. Only information that is verifiable should be accepted as audit evidence. Objective evidence leading to audit findings should be recorded.

**9.4.3** During the observation of production processes and products in storage, the following additional actions should be considered:

- a) Pan the live video feed regularly to maximize peripheral view of all operations
- b) Ensure that the quality of the video is appropriate to allow optimal viewing for details such as cracks in products and dimensional measurements.



- c) Although one day is typically allocated for the review of these items, performing this review via ICT may be cumbersome and slow the review process. The auditor and auditee will need to coordinate and cooperate during these activities, understanding that additional time for the audit may be necessary.

**9.5 Preparing audit conclusions and generating audit findings**

Audit evidence should be evaluated against the audit criteria in order to determine the audit findings. Audit findings can indicate conformance or nonconformance with audit criteria, and these are to be documented. Review the audit findings, and any other appropriate information collected during the audit, against the audit objectives. Audit conclusions can address issues such as the following:

- a) the extent of conformity with the audit criteria and robustness of the management system, including the effectiveness of the management system in meeting the stated objectives,
- b) the effective implementation and maintenance of the management system,
- c) the capability of the management review process to ensure the continuing suitability, adequacy, effectiveness, and improvement of the management system, and
- d) achievement of audit objectives, coverage of audit scope, and fulfilment of audit criteria.

**9.6 Conducting the closing meeting**

**9.6.1** At the conclusion of the audit, the Plant Auditor will conduct a closing meeting with the client's designated representative(s) to present the audit findings and conclusions. The scope and purpose of the closing meeting are similar to the normal, onsite meeting. Participants in the closing meeting should include appropriate plant management and, where appropriate, those responsible for the functions or processes that have been audited. The closing meeting could include the audit client (PCI) and other parties.

**9.6.2** To ensure the appropriate parties, including additional plant staff, participate in the closing meeting, the auditor may schedule the closing meeting at a later time. Whenever possible, the meeting should not occur later than the end of the next business day.

**9.6.3** The meeting should be formal and minutes, including records of attendance, should be kept, using the appropriate form. For remote audits, the auditor will not need to collect signatures from the client's personnel that attend the closing meeting.

**9.7 Preparing and distributing the audit report**

**9.7.1** The grading of the audit will follow normal procedures, although there will be more items that are Not Observed (N/O) during the remote audit. The audit report will be prepared and distributed according to regular procedures, with the exception of the following:

- a) the audit will be noted as a remote audit
- b) the extent to which ICT has been used in carrying out the audit will be indicated

**9.8 Completing the audit**

The audit is completed when all planned audit activities have been carried out, or as otherwise agreed with PCI (e.g. there might be an unexpected situation that prevents the audit being completed according to the plan).

**9.9 Conducting audit follow-up**

Audit follow-up for remote audits will follow normal, onsite audit procedures.

**9.10 Audit Record Retention**

Audit record retention procedures for remote audits will follow normal, onsite audit procedures.



**PCI- Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute**

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**10. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

MSC-M1, Quality Management System Manual

MSC-P1101, Plant Quality Audit Procedure