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**OFFICIAL NOTICE**  
**IOAS Assessment and Surveillance and Coronavirus COVID-19**  
**March 13, 2020**

Dear CBs,

You are all aware I am sure of the disruption arising in many countries as a result of actions taken to reduce the impact of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, particularly travel restrictions. This may well be affecting your own inspection activities as well as plans that we have already made with you for our surveillance and assessment in 2020. Concern for public health and the well-being of your personnel, that of your clients, and our own team is our highest concern. We anticipate scheme owners will be understanding of the circumstances and several are now issuing their own guidance or requirements on how CBs should manage inspection and certification. IOAS will abide by such scheme owner requirements where available otherwise the following guidelines will apply.

We propose to continue our work as normally as possible. In this regard, IOAS has set out the following approach which will continue to be informed by changing circumstances:

- CBs are advised to assess the risks of continuing certification and establish a documented policy and process, outlining the steps it intends to take in the event that a certified organization is affected by the COVID-19 event or where on-site visits are not possible due to travel restrictions.
- IOAS on-site visits to CBs planned within the next month up until mid-April are currently being rearranged as remote surveillance (maintaining the dates as far as possible) and therefore without witness or review operator visits. Whether, how and when we conduct the operator visits later in the year will depend on how the situation develops. We will have to reissue invoices to suit the new circumstances and/or hold credits on your account as appropriate.
- As far as possible IOAS will keep the visit schedules beyond mid-April as they are for now, pending updated information and continual review.
- During the period of restrictions on travel, IOAS will conduct remote surveillance audits in as many cases as possible assuming the CB is able to do so and allowing for consideration of time zones.
- IOAS will not force you, your clients, our staff or external assessors to take part in any activity if they are not comfortable doing so due to the virus and resulting doubts about travel.
- IOAS will delay purchasing tickets until we are as certain as possible that the visit can go ahead with everybody's agreement.
- When we do purchase flights to at-risk locations, we will also purchase the cancellation policy that allows Cancellation for Any Reason (CFAR). This expense will be passed to CBs.
- If for some reason neither a visit nor a remote audit is possible during 2020, IOAS will refer to its PL0510 Policy on dangerous situations and PL0522 Emergency exceptions granting policy. This will allow the IOAS to grant exceptions for the visit in extreme cases. Instead we will require the CB to submit information to allow IOAS to conduct a desk audit to support the continuation of accreditation by IOAS.

- Unfortunately, we will not be able to grant accreditation for new applications if circumstances do not allow us to make an on-site visit to the CB office and conduct the necessary operator site visits. We will however give priority to new applications to avoid such circumstances. The need for operator visits as part of extensions of scope will be decided according to our normal policy and may hold up granting those extensions where they are deemed essential.
- Re-assessment visits to CB offices may be conducted remotely and a second priority will be given to conducting the required operator site visits.

IOAS is committed to handling these somewhat unusual circumstances with fairness and with avoidance of any form of discrimination. Given the fast-changing situation we will almost certainly need to update you in the near future.

We seek your understanding and cooperation under these special circumstances. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Client Manager in the first instance.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Crucefix', with a stylized flourish underneath.

David Crucefix PhD  
Executive Director