



OFFICIAL NOTICE

IOAS Assessment and Surveillance and Coronavirus COVID-19

March 13, 2020 – **updated October 1, 2020**

Dear CBs,

We first issued this notice in March 2020 and have been updating regularly as we learn more and adapt to the ongoing and constantly changing situation. Concern for public health and the well-being of your personnel, that of your clients, and our own team remains a priority but, like everybody, we are looking to balance that with ensuring we continue our work. Expectations of scheme owners and any updates are regularly posted on our web site. All visits planned for the remainder of 2020 are being organised on a case by case basis, to be conducted either on site or remotely depending on the in-country conditions and the possibilities for IOAS personnel to travel. On September 10, 2020 IOAS issued an Official Notice '[IOAS Guidelines for remote assessments of CBs and CB client sites](#)' which CBs should refer to in order to help ensure valid assessments are achieved.

Remote assessment of CB offices has been going well and we have been able to do some first remote operator visits which have been successful. However, we are finding that there is additional preparation time required for remote assessments, such as conducting a test call, that was not accounted for in our fee schedule. For this reason, we are now including an additional 0.5 days for preparation for all remote assessments (including office and operator visits) in addition to the usual 1 day the IOAS requires for report writing. In the past our assessors were doing prep work during travel time, which is no longer being charged for remote assessments, so the overall cost to the CB is still lower than budgeted.

Based on this experience and our increased confidence in the remote approach the change we are introducing as of **October 1, 2020** is that **initial accreditation and extension of scope office assessment and operator site 'visits' may be completed remotely** as long as we consider the arrangements allow us to verify all requirements. If during the course of such assessments the IOAS considers the accreditation activity was insufficient due to its remote nature, further activity may be required either remotely or when on-site access is possible before granting accreditation.

As informed in the previous version of this notice, we will use various techniques and approaches to implement assessments, the choice being based on conditions and risk. In addition to remote witness audits performed by one remote assessor we are introducing a hybrid option for some witness audits. In the latter case we would assign a qualified assessor attending remotely while a locally contracted individual attends in person. The attending personnel will live stream the inspection activities using a cell phone or tablet camera via video conference program such as Zoom. There is an additional daily rate of \$500 USD plus expenses associated with this option to cover the cost of the additional personnel resource.

Another option that our client CBs may find helpful is for IOAS to collaborate with local Accreditation Bodies. In this case we may subcontract the assessment to a local AB, who will assign one of their assessors to complete the visit on-site following IOAS procedures and using IOAS forms and documents. For this service IOAS would pass through their daily rate with a \$200 US/day markup to cover our administration

costs. The rates will vary depending on the collaborating Accreditation Body's daily rate, with an expected range between \$1000-\$1600 USD instead of the IOAS current daily rate of \$850.¹

To summarize,

- For all CBs who have not yet completed their planned assessment activities for 2020, we will be moving forward with organising office assessments, witness, and/ or review audits at operator sites through whichever of the above approaches are most appropriate;
- If for some reason neither an onsite visit nor a remote audit is possible during 2020, we will refer to our PL0510 Policy on dangerous situations and PL0522 Emergency exceptions granting policy. This may allow the IOAS to grant exceptions for the visit in such cases. Instead we may require the CB to submit further information for desk audit, conduct additional remote assessment or require additional on-site surveillance when access becomes possible. These options may be subject to scheme owner restriction;
- We will proceed to use various remote assessment techniques for initial applications and scope extensions where circumstances to date have not allowed us to make an on-site visit to the CB office and conduct the necessary operator site visits. When all requirements are deemed to have been satisfactorily assessed using such techniques, it will be possible to grant accreditation.

We are committed to being even-handed with CBs in applying the different approaches over time. The assessment and surveillance approaches implemented in 2020 will be taken into account along with standard risk assessment in determining follow up activity in 2021.

This is additional work for us as well as for you, so 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,



David Crucefix PhD
Executive Director

¹ Note: In this case the review and closure of NC responses and the accreditation decision would still be completed by IOAS. The only portion of the process to be sub-contracted would be the assessment visit itself. Reference ISO/IEC 17011 §6.4