

# Certification Rights and Duties

## Audit Process

A complete audit cycle follows the stages of:

1. Application: The client shall receive an application form from AWMS. Prior to engaging in any certification activity, this application form must be completed and returned to AWMS. The information contained in this form is used to develop each client's audit program.
2. Certification Agreement: The client shall receive a certification agreement that shall serve as a legally enforceable agreement for the provision of certification activities to the client. This document must be completed and returned to AWMS prior to any audit activity. The certification agreement must be signed by both the client's representative for the management system(s) being audited and a member of the client's organization responsible for processing account/invoice payments. Signature of the certification agreement shall also acknowledge receipt of and agreement to the rights and duties contained in this document.
3. Initial certification audit
  - a. Stage 1: The stage I audit serves as a formal documented readiness review. The stage 1 audit shall also provide a focus for planning the stage 2 audit. The stage I audit may be conducted off-site, on-site, or a combination of both.
  - b. Stage 2: The purpose of the stage II audit is to evaluate the implementation, including effectiveness, of the client's management system. The stage 2 audit is conducted at the site(s) of the client.
4. Surveillance audits: The purpose of surveillance audits is to allow AWMS to maintain confidence that the certified management system continues to fulfill requirements between recertification audits. Surveillance audits are conducted at the site(s) of the client. AWMS offers surveillance options of: semi-annual (every 6 months), every nine (9) months, and annual (every 12 months). In all cases the first surveillance audit must be conducted within 12 months of the last day of the initial certification audit.
5. Re-certification audit: A re-certification audit must be conducted in order to evaluate the continued fulfillment of all of the requirements of the relevant management system standard (and other normative documents). Re-certification is required within three years of the date of the current certification date. The re-certification audit must be conducted with sufficient time to complete the audit process prior to expiration. Re-certification audits are not required to follow the stage 1 / stage 2 format, although this may be necessary if there have been significant changes to the client. If it is determined that a stage 1 is not required a client may proceed directly to the on-site audit.

## Process for granting and maintaining certification

The decision for granting and maintaining certification is made based upon a review of the audit team's final report by an AWMS employee qualified as a lead auditor in the management system(s) being audited (peer reviewer).

See the Certification Process Flowchart for a complete description of the audit process.

## Process for Suspending Certification

The decision for suspending certification is made on a case-by-case basis by the peer reviewer. Factors that may lead to a suspension of certification include:

- the client's certified management system has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements, including requirements for the effectiveness of the management system (defined by AWMS as at least one major nonconformity);
- the certified client does not allow surveillance or recertification audits to be conducted at the required frequencies;

- the certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension;
- non-payment or late payment of invoices.

A decision on suspension would be communicated in writing to the client.

In cases of a failure in the management system, a suspension will be lifted upon closure of all major nonconformities. In most cases this will require an on-site audit to confirm effectiveness of corrective actions taken by the client. The decision to lift suspension shall be recorded in an audit report covering these activities.

In cases of non-payment or late payment a suspension will be lifted upon receipt of payment.

While suspended, the client must refrain from further promotion/communication of certification. AWMS makes the suspended status of a client's certification publicly accessible via the AWMS website and may take any other measures deemed appropriate.

### Withdrawing Certification and Recertification

AWMS will restore the suspended certification if the issue that has resulted in the suspension has been resolved. Failure to resolve the issues that have resulted in the suspension within 6 months will result in a withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification.

Upon notice of withdrawal of certification, the client is responsible for discontinuing its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference to a certified status. AWMS makes the withdrawn status of a client's certification publicly accessible via the AWMS website and may take any other measures deemed appropriate.

### Normative Requirements for Certification

The normative documents for certification shall be identified on the audit plan for each certification activity.

### Information About Fees for Application, Initial Certification, and Continuing Certification

AWMS shall provide a proposal on a case-by-case basis that shall include specific audit fees. A final invoice shall be provided detailing specific levels-of-effort and associated charges.

The client is required to pay the full invoiced amount directly to AWMS within fifteen (15) days from the date of receipt. Should the client wish to dispute an invoice, this must be done within fifteen (15) days of receipt.

A payment discount of 2% of the total invoiced amount is available if payment is received within seven (7) days from the date of receipt.

For Certification Audits: The certification process shall not be completed until payment is received by AWMS.

For Surveillance Audits: For Surveillance Audits: Late fees of 1.5% of total invoiced amount shall be applied per month for payments received after 15 days; in addition, AWMS may suspend certification. Certification shall be suspended for payments not received within forty-five (45) days from the date of invoicing. In cases of suspension due to late payment a \$650 reinstatement fee shall be applied.

For Recertification Audits: The re-certification process shall not be completed until payment is received by AWMS. Payment received after current certificate expiration date shall result in a lapse of certification.

## Client Responsibilities

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AWMS requires all clients to:

1. Conform with certification requirements;
2. Make all necessary arrangements for the conduct of the audit, including provisions for examining documentation and the access to all processes and areas, records and personnel for the purposes of initial certification, surveillance, recertification and resolution of complaints;
3. Make provisions, where applicable, to accommodate the presence of observers.

## Appeals and Complaints

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Should a client or outside party have concerns regarding any unsatisfactory condition encountered during an audit/verification the team leader should immediately be made aware of the specifics. The team leader has the responsibility to make every effort to resolve the issue without compromising the integrity and objectives of the audit/verification process.

If the team leader is unable to resolve the situation to the complete satisfaction of the client or should an appeal or complaint be received after the completion of the audit/verification the President is responsible for initiating a formal review. If the President was involved in the audit/verification for which the appeal or complaint has been received, the CEO is responsible for fulfilling the responsibilities of the President.

The President is responsible for receiving and beginning documentation on an Appeal or Complaint Form. The President will validate the information provided by the appellant or complainant and investigate the situation, which may include discussions with the audit/verification team. The President will evaluate the available information and make a decision on what actions are to be taken in response to the appeal or complaint, taking into account the results of previous similar occurrences. The President is responsible for ensuring that any appropriate corrections and corrective actions are taken, including, if deemed necessary, performing a new audit/verification.

The appeal or complaint form is used to document each stage of the process, including information about the appellant or complainant, the circumstances of the appeal or complaint and the resolution, including any actions undertaken.

The President is responsible for giving formal notice to the appellant or complainant of the end of the appeals-handling process or complaint-handling process.

AWMS top management is responsible for determining, together with the President, the certified client, and the complainant, whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution is made public.

## Use of the AWMS Certification Mark

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A certified organization may use the Advanced Waste Management Systems, Incorporated (AWMS) certification mark only in conjunction with its own mark on its certificates, stationery and literature associated with its verified activities, subject to the conditions below.

The AWMS certification mark shall be reproduced:

- In black, green, or in the predominant color of the letterhead or printing;
- On a clearly contrasting background;
- In a size which makes all features of the mark clearly distinguishable.

The AWMS certification mark shall not be used by a certified organization on any document unless the document relates in whole or in part to activities of the organization that were audited by AWMS. This shall not prevent a certified organization from including the certification mark on its preprinted letterhead paper.

AWMS' mark or reference to AWMS shall not be applied to laboratory test, calibration, or inspection reports or certificates.

AWMS' mark or reference to AWMS shall not be placed on products or product packaging in a way that may be interpreted as denoting product certification. AWMS' mark may not be used on a product or product packaging or in any other way as to suggest that AWMS has approved or endorsed any product, process or service of a certified organization, or in any other misleading manner. If a statement is made that the client has a certified management system, any such statement shall include reference to:

- identification (e.g. brand or name) of the certified client;
- the type of management system (e.g. environment) and the applicable standard;
- AWMS as the certification body.

If necessary, other requirements with regard to the use of marks will be developed in consultation with individual organizations. Such requirements will be made part of the verification agreement, and the certified organization will immediately be subject to such requirements.

Misuse of the certification mark will lead to corrective action including publication of the misuse and, if necessary, legal action.

## References to Certification

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AWMS requires that the client:

- a) conforms to the requirements of AWMS when making reference to its certification status in communication media such as the internet, brochures or advertising, or other documents;
- b) does not make or permit any misleading statement regarding its certification;
- c) does not use or permit the use of a certification document or any part thereof in a misleading manner;
- d) upon suspension or withdrawal of its certification, discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains a reference to certification, as directed by AWMS;
- e) amends all advertising matter when the scope of certification has been reduced;
- f) does not allow reference to its management system certification to be used in such a way as to imply that AWMS certifies a product (including service) or process;
- g) does not imply that the certification applies to activities that are outside the scope of certification, and;
- h) does not use its certification in such a manner that would bring AWMS and/or the certification system into disrepute and lose public trust.

Use of any statement on product packaging or in accompanying information shall in no way imply that the product, process, or service is certified. Any statement must include reference to:

- identification of the certified client;
- the type of management system (e.g. environmental, energy) and the applicable standard;
- identification of AWMS.

## Short-Notice Audits

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In general, AWMS does not allow audits to be conducted on short notice (defined as less than 2 weeks). Special circumstances may require short-notice, however. For routine certification, surveillance, and re-certification audits circumstances may include (but are not limited to) severe weather, personnel changes, and production schedule. In all such cases, AWMS' procedures for conducting audit shall still be followed.

## Confidentiality Policy

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Each certified client’s name, standards certified to, and scope of certification is communicated via the AWMS website. This is the only information placed in the public domain.

AWMS shall treat all information and data observed during the course of an audit as confidential. This information and data shall not be shared with a third-party without consent from the client. AWMS’ accrediting bodies and the SEP Administrator are not considered third parties and are entitled to the information specified within ISO 17021, ANSI/MSE 50028, and the SEP Certification Protocol.

## Revision History

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- 6/24/14 ..... Added revision history, Added confidentiality policy.
- 2/18/16 ..... Updated format; Added final paragraph to “References to certification”; Added first paragraph to “Confidentiality policy”.
- 6/20/17 ..... Added SEP Administrator to Confidentiality Policy.
- 7/10/17 ..... Updated “Use of the AWMS Certification Mark” section.