IECQ OPERATIONAL DOCUMENT

IEC Quality Assessment System for Electronic Components (IECQ System)

IECQ Guide for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting IECQ System, IECQ CBs and Certified / Approved Organizations
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IECQ Guide for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting IECQ System, IECQ CBs and Certified / Approved Organizations

INTRODUCTION

In today's normal business environment, every organization including manufacturers, suppliers and service providers, are continuously exposed to opportunities, challenges, and risks. However, extraordinary events or circumstances beyond the control of the organization can happen. Under these circumstances, IECQ System and IECQ CBs should have a process for the proper maintenance of accreditation and certification in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this document.

It is important for the IECQ System and IECQ CBs to be able

• to demonstrate reasonable due diligence, mutual understanding and trust and
• to establish an appropriate course of actions in response to extraordinary events.

The operational document establishes the guidance for IECQ System and its accepted CBs on the appropriate course of action.

This operational document is not intended to override requirements in standards or schemes. Where a standard or scheme provides no flexibility regardless of the crises that has occurred, guidance and an agreed way ahead should always be sought from the IECQ Executive.

In line with the Cooperation Agreement between IEC and International Accreditation Forum, Inc (IAF) publication IAF ID 3:2011 has been consulted in the preparation of this Guide and acknowledgement is made of this assistance.

This edition 1.1 of IECQ OD 0201 replaces the first edition IECQ OD 0201. Main changes to this edition include:

- Includes guidance on man-day allocation for remote audits
- Clarification of the items expected to be confirmed during the first on-site audit, following resumption of normal operations.

Document History

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IECQ Guide for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting IECQ System, IECQ CBs and Certified / Approved Organizations

1 Scope

This operational document establishes the guidance for IECQ System and its accepted IECQ CBs on the appropriate course of action under extraordinary events or circumstances.

This operational document is not intended to override rules and requirements in standards or IECQ schemes. Where a standard or IECQ scheme provides no flexibility regardless of the crises that has occurred, guidance and an agreed way ahead should always be sought from the IECQ Executive.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:
- ISO Online browsing platform: available at http://www.iso.org/obp

2.1 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.

2.2 organization
An organization holding current IECQ Certification or Approval.

3 Extraordinary event or circumstance affecting an organization holding current IECQ Certification or Approval

An extraordinary event affecting an organization or an IECQ CB may temporarily prevent the IECQ CB from carrying out planned audits on-site. Under such situations, IECQ System and IECQ CBs shall establish (in consultation with certified organizations) a reasonable planned course of action.

3.1 Risks of continuing certification / approval

The IECQ CB shall assess the risks of continuing certification / approval and establish a documented policy and process, outlining the steps it will take in the event an organization is affected by an extraordinary event.

The established policy and process of the IECQ CB should define methods for evaluating the current and expected future situation of the organization and define alternate potential short-term methods of assessing the organization to verify continuing effectiveness of its compliance with IECQ Scheme requirements.

To enable the IECQ CB to assess risk for continuing certification / approval and understand the organization’s current and expected future situation, the IECQ CB shall gather necessary
information from the organization before deciding on an appropriate course of action. The information collected by the IECQ CB should include the following as appropriate:

- When will the organization be able to function normally?
- When will the organization be able to ship products or perform the service defined within the current scope of certification / approval?
- Will the organization need to use alternative manufacturing and/or distribution sites? If so, are these currently covered under the current certification or will they need to be evaluated?
- To what extent has operation of the management system been affected?
- To what extent has operation of the processes covered under the IECQ certification / approval scope been affected?
- Has the organization conducted an impact assessment?
- Only for IECQ AP – does existing stock still meet customer specifications or will the organization contact its customers regarding possible concessions if allowed for under the IECQ specification?
- Only for IECQ AP – will some of the processes and/or services performed or products shipped be subcontracted to other service providers, if allowed for under the IECQ specification? If so, how will the other service providers’ activities be controlled by the organization?
- Only for IECQ ADHP Scheme – Identification of alternative sampling sites, as appropriate.

The IECQ CB shall retain the risk analysis records conducted for each client.

If the risk of continuing certification /approval is low and based on the collected information the IECQ CB may need to consider alternative short-term methods of assessment to verify continuing compliance effectiveness for the organization. This shall include as a minimum conducting a remote audit by requesting relevant documentation (including but not limited to: Management review meeting minutes and outcomes, results of internal audits, objectives, performance, corrective action records, test/inspection records, etc.) to be reviewed off-site by assigned qualified IECQ CB auditor resource to determine continuing suitability of the certification (on a short-term basis only). The IECQ CB auditor recommendation including a short-term plan shall be reviewed by the IECQ CB for a certification decision. At a minimum, the process should address the following items:

- Proactive communication between the affected organization and the IECQ CB.
- Steps the IECQ CB will take to assess the affected organization and how the plan to move forward will be communicated.
- Specifying the maximum time an alternative short-term assessment method could be used before suspension or withdrawal of certification
- Criteria for renewing normal oversight, including the method and timing of any reinstatement activities and assessments.
- Possible amendments to organization’s oversight plans on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with IECQ CB procedures.
- Ensuring that any deviation from accreditation and IECQ Scheme requirements and the IECQ CB procedures is justified and documented, and agreement reached with the IECQ System on plans to address temporary deviations from requirements.
- Re-establishment of surveillance/recertification activities according to IECQ CB oversight plans when access to the affected location is re-established.

If contact with the organization cannot be made, the IECQ CB should follow normal processes and procedures for suspension and withdrawal of certification.
3.1.1 Remote audit man-day allocation

The minimum man-day allocation for conducting remote audits in accordance with 3.1 above, is 0.5 man-day. In some situations, the risk of continuing certification / approval maybe deemed as a medium to high risk and therefore other additional remote auditing techniques maybe necessary along with an increased man-day allocation, in such situations the IECQ CBs should seek further guidance from the IECQ System. This man-day allocation for conducting a remote audit is not deemed part of any deferred on-site audit man-days.

3.2 Short-term methods of assessment

When developing alternate short-term methods of assessment, the IECQ CB should take into consideration the following limitations:

3.2.1 New Applications / Initial Audits

New Applications maybe accepted and processed up to completion of stage 1.

Address availability of resources to perform all activities of testing and auditing as part of the contract review: e.g. carry out testing or stage 1 off-site document reviews now and defer the on-site audit until the extraordinary event or circumstance has sufficiently concluded to resume normal IECQ CB operations BUT must have agreement from the organizations.

3.2.2 Surveillance Audits

Normally, a surveillance audit must be completed, and the certification decision made prior to the annual anniversary of the IECQ Certificate Original Issue Date (Cycle Date), no greater than 12 months apart to avoid loss of certification. However, providing that sufficient evidence has been collected as above, to provide confidence that compliance with the issued certification / approval is effective, consideration may be given to deferring the on-site surveillance audit for a period not normally exceeding 6 months.

There may be specific circumstances by which an IECQ CB can justify adjusting the timing of a surveillance audit. If an organization has to shut down completely for a limited period of time (less than 6 months), it would be reasonable for an IECQ CB to defer an audit that had been scheduled to occur during the shutdown until the organization resumes operations. As soon as is reasonably possible the organization should inform the IECQ CB of the planned date which operations will resume so that the IECQ CB can schedule and conduct the audit promptly.

Otherwise the certificate has to be suspended or cancelled.

3.2.3 Recertification Audits

Normally the recertification audit must be completed, and the recertification decision made prior to IECQ Certificate Expiration Date to avoid loss of certification. However, providing that sufficient evidence has been collected as above, to provide confidence that compliance with the issued certification / approval is effective consideration may be given to extend the certification for a period not normally exceeding 12 months beyond the original expiry date.

The on-site re-certification audit shall be carried out within this permissible extended period. Otherwise, a new initial audit should be performed. The expiration of the renewed certification shall be based on the original recertification cycle.

Otherwise the certificate has to be suspended or cancelled.

3.2.4 Information to the IECQ System

All deviations from the established certification / approval scheme or program shall be justified, documented and made available to IECQ System upon request.
3.2.5 Resumption of normal operations IECQ CB

Once the extraordinary event or circumstance has sufficiently concluded to resume normal operations the IECQ CB shall promptly conduct any deferred on-site audits.

During the first on-site audit, following resumption of normal operations, the IECQ CB shall confirm:

- Current status of the organizations management system (Internal Audits, Management Review, Policy, HSF objectives, etc.),
- Validation of the provided evidence used during the risk analysis and in most cases a resulting remote audit,
- How the organization maintained the conformity of their certification HSPM system during any Extraordinary Circumstances and Events situation (i.e. any additional controls put in place to ensure supply chain integrity, staff qualifications and awareness if non normal resources needed to be used etc.)

The IECQ CB shall determine if any reasonable additional man-day allocation is required to cover the confirmation above.

Note: For example, IECQ HSPM Scheme, the man-day allocation may need to be increased up to but no greater than an initial HSPM audit man-day allocation in accordance with IECQ 03-5 Annex A.

4 Extraordinary event or circumstance affecting normal operation of the IECQ Peer Assessment Programme for an IECQ CB

4.1 IECQ CBs accepted to operate within the IECQ Schemes

An extraordinary event affecting the IECQ CB may temporarily prevent the IECQ System from carrying out planned assessments on-site of its accepted IECQ CBs. When these situations occur, IECQ System and IECQ CBs operating within their IECQ accreditation need to establish a reasonable planned course of action.

The IECQ System should assess the risks of continuing acceptance of those IECQ CB’s due within 6-12 months of the commencement of the extraordinary event or circumstance affecting IECQ CB’s.

The IECQ CB’s communication with the IECQ System should contain, at least, an evaluation of the IECQ CB’s current and expected future situation. The following information should be provided by the IECQ CB to the IECQ System as appropriate:

- Scope and extent of the affected services and business areas and sites.
- Number of affected clients.
- When will the IECQ CB be able to function normally within the current scope of accreditation?
- Proactive communication between affected certified / approved organizations and the IECQ CB.
- Steps the IECQ CB will take to assess those affected organizations and how the plan to move forward will be communicated to the certified organizations.
- Possible amendments to each certified organization’s oversight plans on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with this IECQ System policy document and the IECQ CB procedures.
- Ensuring that any deviation from accreditation and IECQ System requirements and IECQ CB procedures is justified and documented.
- Re-establishment of surveillance/recertification activities according to IECQ CB oversight plans when access to the area is re-established.
The IECQ CB shall provide a report to the IECQ Secretariat whom on the basis of the above being addressed may permit a deferral of up 12 months for the scheduled on-site assessment or witness assessment.

The IECQ Executive shall decide on any deferral of the scheduled assessment beyond 12 months based on a report from the IECQ Secretariat

4.2 Breakdown of an accepted IECQ CB

This may occur when the IECQ CB has not been able to recuperate from the extraordinary event or circumstances that affected the IECQ CB’s business, and therefore, is no longer able or authorized to offer its accredited service, either completely or in part (breakdown of the IECQ CB). The same applies to liquidation or bankruptcy. In these cases the IECQ CB is obliged to inform the IECQ System immediately.

Under these circumstances, the IECQ CB (in consultation with its recognising IECQ MB as required) and the IECQ System shall cooperate in facilitating the transition to other IECQ CB(s) for the currently certified organizations in accordance with IECQ 03-1 Clause 9.18 for the Transfer of Certificate of Conformity.

4.3 New Applications (CBs seeking to join IECQ Schemes) / or Scope Extensions from IECQ CBs operating within the IECQ Schemes

During any extraordinary event or circumstance new IECQ CB applications and applications for scope extensions requiring on-site visits from countries effected and travel bans in place shall not be processed beyond application stage, (remain on hold).

IECQ System shall take into account the challenges in obtaining peer assessors with permission to travel to certain regions, regarding timely progress of applications.