TIP SHEET 5

THE SITE AUDIT

Your first site audit as part of your initial SQF certification audit should not be stressful. This is an opportunity to show the auditor all you've accomplished as part of your development of your SQF System! The purpose of a site audit is to establish and verify the effectiveness of the SQF food safety system, to determine that food safety hazards are effectively controlled, and verify that the level of commitment the SQF System is demonstrated, and confirm that those products and areas exempt from the scope of certification do not pose a risk to the products covered under certification.

The goals of this tip sheet is to provide clarification and guidance as to what to expect throughout the SQF site audit process as well as what comes next once it has been completed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	APPLICABLE CODE ELEMENTS
o UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS OF A SITE AUDIT AND ULTIMATELY, SQF CERTIFICATION	o PART A, SECTION 2.7
o DEFINE THE SITE AUDIT PROCESSES	
o EXPLORE THE OPTIONS AT EACH STEP IN THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS	
o DESCRIBE THE PURPOSE OF A SITE AUDIT AND WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE AUDIT	

KEY TERMS

o **CERTIFICATION**

The issuing of a certificate of registration to a site by a certification body after the successful completion of a certification or re-certification audit. A certification body certifies a site.

o **CORRECTIVE ACTION**

Action to eliminate the cause of a detected non-conformity or other undesirable situation.

1

TIP SHEET 5

The Site Audit

1. Schedule an audit with your certification body (CB).
    i. In some cases, the initial certification will consist of a document review and a site audit. For the Fundamentals program, the document review is optional and it can either be done separately or as part of the site audit.
    ii. The audit duration will depend on the size of the site, the number of employees and the type of products being audited. SQF has developed an audit duration guide that can be found in Part A of the SQF Code. This is guidance that the CB and site can use to get a better understanding how long the audit should be.

2. Once the audit has been scheduled, the CB and the auditor will contact you with the auditor's name, the audit schedule and confirm the audit location and dates.

3. The audit.

   The site audit will typically consist of the following stages:

    i. Opening Meeting
        1. At minimum, the opening meeting includes the food safety team and senior site management.
        2. The auditor will confirm the scope of the audit and review the audit agenda.
    ii. Gathering Objective Evidence
        1. The auditor collects the evidence of compliance with the Code elements three ways:
            a. Conducts interview of employees.
            b. Reviews documents.
            c. Observes practices.
        2. The auditor may write a lot of notes (so don't be nervous).
    iii. Review of Documents
        1. The audit will review your documents and records in support of your food safety plan. Examples include:
            a. HACCP plan (s).
            b. CCP activity.
            c. Verification and validation.
        2. The auditor will review all required records to determine if they are meeting the Code requirement, are up to date, and are authorized or signed.

TIP SHEET 5

    iv.   Site Inspection
1. The auditor will review your site as outlined in the SQF Code. Examples include:
   a. Physical structure.
   b. Location.
   c. Condition of equipment.
   d. Flow of employees and the process.
2. The entire site will be reviewed including the interior, exterior grounds, trailers, dock areas, junk yards, etc.

    v.   Interview of Personnel.
1. The auditor will interview levels of employees, including
   a. Senior site management.
   b. CCP operators.
   c. Supervisors.
   d. Shift workers.
   e. Maintenance, production, sanitation.
2. Questions the auditor will ask are typically open-ended and may include;
   a. What would you do if there was a food safety issue?
   b. How would you monitor that CCP?
   c. What do you do to maintain food safety?
   d. What are your job responsibilities?

    vi.   Observation.
1. The auditor will observe what the employees in the site are doing to support the food safety system. For example
   a. Are employees following the site's SOPs and GMPs?
   b. Are employees correctly performing their monitoring duties?

    vii.   Closing Meeting.
1. The auditor will hold a closing meeting to share the audit conclusions.
   a. Consider including the same people from the opening meeting.
   b. The auditor will review all the non-conformities.
   c. The auditor will review the timelines and expectations to close out non-conformities.

    viii.   Follow Up Actions and Closing Out the Audit.
1. For identified non-conformities, conduct a root cause analysis and implement corrective actions.
   a. Identify the root cause of the non-conformity.
   b. Implement the corrective action.
   c. Submit before the stated deadline.

TIP SHEET 5

Corrective action

1. Determine / document any immediate action required / taken.
    a. Determine the cause of the problem.
    b. Evaluate action needed on the identified cause.
    c. Determine if the problem exists elsewhere in the system and implement actions needed.
2. Document the actions taken and the results of the action taken.
    a. Review/verify and document effectiveness of action taken with objective evidence.
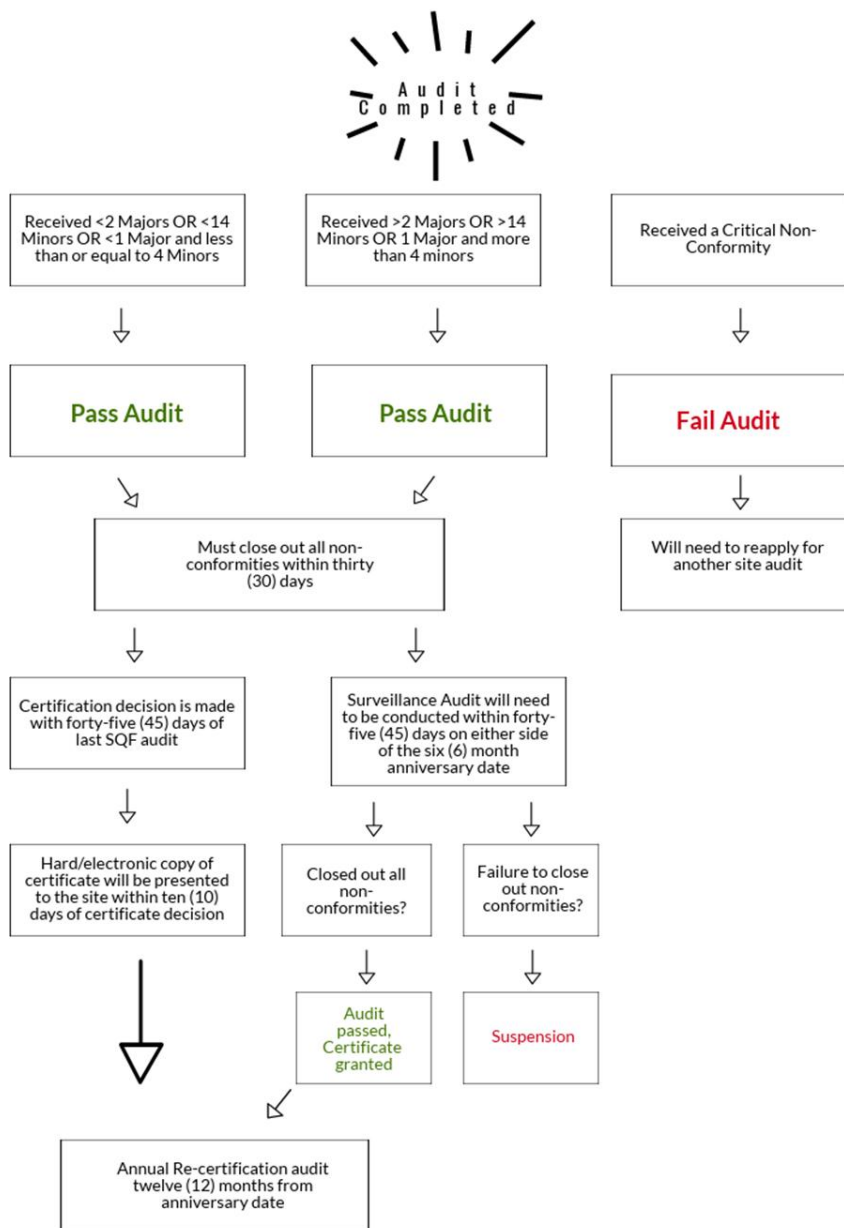
Audit Scoring

Deviations from the SQF Code impacts whether the site passes the site audit. These are classified into three different categories for non-conformities.

1. Minor non-conformity: An omission or deficiency in the SQF System that produces unsatisfactory conditions that if not addressed may lead to a risk to food safety but not likely to cause a system element breakdown.
2. Major non-conformity: is an omission or deficiency in the SQF System producing unsatisfactory conditions that carry a food safety risk and are likely to result in a system element breakdown.
3. Critical non-conformity: is a breakdown of control (s) at a critical control point, a pre-requisite program, or other process step and judged likely to cause a significant public health risk and/or where product is contaminated.

TIP SHEET 5

The site audit for the Food Safety Fundamentals Program is unscored. It is simply pass/fail. Follow the path here to better understand how the non-conformities raised during your audit affect your certification:

TIP SHEET 5

RELEVANT RESOURCES

- SQFI YouTube Channel
  https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC39i4KZQ7BhAg0SzuEuAVTQ/featured