

Unannounced Audits

- values & challenges.



What are Unannounced Audits?



- Unannounced audits have been a tool for the certification sector for many years, including use in the horticulture sector by schemes such as GLOBALG.A.P and SQF.
- Different schemes have slightly different ways of managing their programs.
- Regulatory audits can commonly be unannounced.
- For those that have completed unannounced audits, it is generally accepted that it is a requirement that must be met
- The concept though may still be new to some.
- An audit is defined under ISO/IEC 19011 as:
Systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining objective evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled.
- In essence, an unannounced audit is the same as a normal external audit, but businesses will not know the exact day the auditor is coming to the business or site.

How it works



- Your certification provider will give the business a window for which the audit will be conducted.
- This varies by schemes, but for Freshcare it is 60 days.
- This allows the certification body and site to complete the audit activity, address any CAR's etc., make the certification decision, so that the certificate does not expire.
- “Blackout dates” can be used to cover periods of nonoperation but must be valid!
- A site still gets an audit plan, so they know what will be covered, but there will not be a date of commencement.

Benefits

- “Audit readiness” at all times - becomes part of the culture of the business....the way things are done.
- The site cannot necessarily guide the audit to their benefit. (Is this a benefit to the site?)
- In most cases unannounced audits provide the auditor objective evidence of how a business operates at all times.
- May benefit in seeing other parts of operation – like cleaning, maintenance, spraying that may not otherwise get seen.
- Your customers can be confident in your systems and practices.
- Certification providers can schedule more flexibly.



Challenges... for who?



- Business must be compliant each day, every day of the year/ harvest season.
- Site cannot “audit prepare” and completely clean the day before an audit.
- More likely NCR/ CAR are raised during early days of unannounced audits.
- Auditor may not get the attention of the business contact as they are busy conducting/ overseeing operations.
- Main business representative unavailable.
- Harvest or other operations may not be functioning due to seasonal variations.
- Remote locations, or those with limited services, require certification bodies to plan the logistics of the audit.



Challenges that are a good thing?

- Businesses need to have more than one person who understands a sites food safety system.
- Gaps in record keeping are more likely to be highlighted.
- Day to day practices in personal hygiene more likely to be highlighted.
- Day to day practices in site GMP/GAP more likely to be highlighted.
- For larger businesses/operations, can give “remote” management a clear picture of a sites’ performance.

THIS = ROBUSTNESS = IMPROVEMENT

What do I need to do?

Businesses	Stakeholders	Certification provider
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete your annual activities (such as internal audit, product testing, management review) on time.• Ensure your site looks its best all the time.• Ensure all your staff know to operate to their best all the time.• Keep up to date with your record keeping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide positive messaging around benefits of unannounced audits.• Be clear on expectations if you are a customer.• Lend support to upskill smaller businesses.• Be consistent in messaging. – take the Fear out!• Provide examples of best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be consistent in messaging.• Train your staff.• Review logistics and show benefits derived.• Spread “the load” across the sector.• Provide positive feedback when businesses get it right.• Take the Fear out! Help make it an easy process to achieve.