

Most Common SQF Audit Mistakes

Are you familiar with the *most common* issues that occur during a food safety and quality certification audit? We recently took a survey from several SQF-certified auditors, asking them to give us the most frequently missed requirements from their experiences in the field. Below, you'll find several requirements, including specific codes which are often misinterpreted, overlooked, or not recorded during an audit. Please note that all of these references are taken from the *SQF 2000 Code: A HACCP-Based Supplier Assurance Code for the Food Manufacturing and Distributing Industries (6th Edition/August 2008)*:

Commitment (4.1)

- 4.1.1.1: Components of the *Senior Management Policy Standard* are missing, such as the organization's commitment to supply safe, quality food, methods used to comply with its customer and regulatory requirements and continually improve its food safety and quality management system, as well as the organization's commitment to establish and review food safety and quality objectives
- 4.1.2.5: Alternates for key personnel are not always identified - who cover's shifts during an absence (leave of absence, vacation, sick days and personal days)
- 4.1.4.1 and 4.1.4.2: Senior Management are not reviewing the SQF 2000 System and documenting the review procedures
- 4.1.6: Business continuity plans do not always indicate the methods and responsibility during a business crises or threat. In other cases, records are not available for testing reviewing and verifying the system
- 4.1.6.3: Records of business continuity plans are, in many cases, missing or not available

Document Control (4.2)

- 4.2.2.2: The following items are missing from the record, which are to be signed and dated by those undertaking the motoring activities: signature or initial, time, result of testing or evaluation, corrective action/corrections

Specification and Product Development (4.3)

- 4.3.3.2: Proof of *chemical* migration testing is not available; requirement states that methods and responsibility for developing and approving detailed specifications and labels for all packaging shall be documented
- 4.3.4: Contracts and specifications of services provided by contract service providers are missing

Corrective and Preventative Action (4.4)

- 4.4.6.1: Corrective action procedures are not complete and root cause are not always identified
- 4.4.7.1: Receipt, storage, processing and handling of non-conforming equipment is not available
- 4.4.9.1: Often, *the method* of release of conforming product is not addressed or specified

Verification (4.5)

- 4.5.2: Validation method (of HACCP plans and Pre-requisite Programs) is not defined or records of validation are maintained and/or methods do not validate the system
- 4.5.1: Records of verification (of Pre-requisite Programs) are not maintained or methods are not defined
- 4.5.5: Internal audit of entire system: no schedule developed, documented training is absent, or in some cases, the system has not been audited

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Sections 5 & 6

Risk analysis not performed for those areas where you may differ from a standard

Food Handling Areas (5.2)

5.2.9.3: Evidence is not available to indicate that product containers, tubs, bins and utensils are made from non-toxic materials

5.2.9.5: Evidence is not available to indicate that protective clothing is made from non-toxic materials

Storage Facilities (5.4)

5.4.6.1: Risk analysis is not performed for alternative storage for items in 5.4.1 to 5.4.5 (refrigerated items, dry goods, packaging and chemicals); if anything is done differently than what is outlined in the standard, then it needs a risk analysis completed and procedures in place to manage risk

Training of Personnel (6.3)

6.3.7.1 vi: Evaluation of the training activities is absent or unavailable

Supplier Approval (6.10)

6.10.3: Methods or frequency on how approved suppliers are monitored and reviewed are not in place, or in some cases, records of this activity are not available

Waste Management and Disposal (6.12)

6.12.4.1: Daily review of the effectiveness of trash removal are not in place or results of review are not documented

This is a good review checklist to ensure you are not missing important documentation, procedures or functions that are important items to have available during an audit. Read the [SQF 2000 Guidance Manual: Guidance for Developing, Documenting and Implementing SQF 2000 Systems for General Food Processing \(6th Edition/ November 2008\)](#) to learn more about how you can design, develop and maintain an SQF 2000 System.