

# Auditing and assessing emergency operations

## Purpose

- Verify the degree of compliance with emergency management (EM) plans, policies, procedures, guides, risk assessments and relevant legislation.
- Provide assurance that personnel are complying with requirements.
- Identify issues and non-conformances for investigation and corrective action to prevent reoccurrence.
- Identify opportunities for improving the management of emergencies, including contributing to after action reviews (AAR).
- Strengthen EM knowledge and capabilities.

## Types

- Assessments – conducted by personnel or teams completing the task usually using a standard checklist.
- Internal (DPI) audits – by independent auditors not involved in the activity and usually coordinated at a State Coordination Centre (SCC) and/or Local Control Centre (LCC) levels.
- External audits – conducted by auditors external to Department of Primary Industries (DPI), usually contracted for a specific skill or reason, e.g., aviation operations audits.

## Assessments

- Function officers (e.g. Operations Officer) are responsible for scheduling and managing assessments in conjunction with the Planning function and Safety Officer (where relevant).
- Non-conformances are to be addressed where appropriate and in a timely manner.
- Systemic issues are to be elevated to the Incident Controller (IC) to be addressed.

## Auditing responsibility

- Audits are coordinated and conducted by the Planning function by auditors. Refer to the [DPI emergency response roles](#) for the role description.
- An Audit Coordinator may be appointed to manage a team of auditors.
- Safety Officers will coordinate safety audits in consultation with Planning.

## Planning audits

- Auditor/Audit Coordinator to engage function officers to determine high risk or problematic areas to be audited.
- Develop an audit program to address risks – record in the ‘audit program template’.
- Assign appropriate auditors and ensure Work Health & Safety processes are followed by all auditors.

## Preparation

Brief of the auditor should include:

- unique identification number, audit title (short description of audit) and audit scope (from audit program)
- contact details and location of auditees and time frame for audit completion
- providing or arranging access to documents relevant to the audit, including copies of:
  - ‘audit report template’
  - documents relating to the audit scope and activities
  - previous audit reports, corrective action documents, incident reports
  - any assessment reports (if applicable).

The auditor should:

- contact auditees and confirm the scope, date, time and likely duration of the audit
- study the briefing documents
- prepare the draft audit report including the checklist of criteria to assess, i.e. criteria requirement in the audit report template

- plan how the audit will be conducted e.g., evidence required and how that will be obtained.

### Initial meeting

Auditor conducts an initial meeting to confirm:

- the proposed audit plan (scope, activities and timeframe) with key contacts (usually the Site Supervisor at field sites, Officer In Charge at Forward Command Posts, IC or relevant function officer at LCC and SCC)
- proposed communication channels
- logistics for site access, induction, and suitable meeting places
- restrictions on site, required Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE), other safety issues, and process to report hazards during the audit observations.

### Conducting the audit

- Gather information and evidence relating to the scope and audit criteria by employing questioning techniques, listening, examining documents and records, observing activities, and inspecting facilities.
- Record evidence on the audit report.
- Evaluate the information against the documented system, establishing compliance (yes), partial conformance (part), non-compliance (no) or not applicable (NA) – record on the audit report.
- Investigate the extent of any variation from the documented requirements and the possible implications.
- Conduct an exit interview with the auditees to:
  - discuss findings, highlighting areas of non-conformance and partial conformance
  - correct any errors documented during the observations
  - indicate recommendations that will be made on the report.

**Note 1:** The auditor has no authority to insist on any changes to activities based on audit findings. The relevant supervisor/function officer/IC is responsible for assessing and implementing recommendations (if appropriate).

**Note 2:** If auditors become aware of serious breaches of legislation, criminal behaviour, or serious non-compliance to DPI/DRNSW policies and Code of Conduct, a report should be made immediately to the relevant supervisor or function officer (depending who is involved in the breaches) and to the relevant IC (via the audit co-ordinator if appointed).

**Note 3:** If dangerous or life-threatening situation is observed by the auditor, the issue must be raised immediately with the local supervisor to enable corrective action to take place without delay. An incident notification report (department online report) must be completed.

### Reporting

- Internal audit reports should be completed using the 'audit report template' with associated paperwork, labelled photos, and site observation report (if required).
- External audit reports should address the key points from the audit report template, i.e., summary of the general performance with respect to the audit scope, any non-conformities, recommendations, or opportunities to improve.
- Reports should be submitted within a week of conducting an audit.
- A pdf version of the final report and a 'response to audit report' form is provided to relevant functions to action.

## Audit responses

The relevant position (usually a function officer or support personnel) is required to complete the following.

- Consider the recommendations and any actions required including further investigations of issues. This should be done in consultation with personnel responsible for the activity.

**Note 4:** Recommendations do not have to be implemented but must be responded to with an explanation of non-implementation.

**Note 5:** It may also be possible only to implement some recommendations post response, requiring a note to that affect.

- Record the required actions in the 'response to recommendation' column on the 'response to audit report' form.
- Implement and track relevant actions.
- Enter the date when relevant actions have been completed.
- Enter name, position, and date when relevant responses are completed.
- Provide the auditor (audit coordinator if appointed) with a copy of the audit with the completed responses (see notes 4 and 5 above).

## References

- Audit program template
- Audit report template
- Response to audit report form