

REGULATORY FOOD SAFETY AUDITS

Food businesses need to have regulatory food safety audits of each facility licensed under the *Food Act 2003*.

These audits are necessary to:

- protect public health and safety
- confirm that a business is supplying food that is safe to eat
- confirm that a business is complying with the Food Regulation 2015.

Responsibilities of a food business

Proprietors of a food business are responsible for managing their Food Safety Program (FSP) which is designed to help identify and manage hazards to food safety.

The *Food Act 2003* requires the proprietor to make sure their FSP is:

1. prepared
2. implemented
3. maintained
4. monitored
5. audited at a set frequency.

Frequency of audits

The frequency of audits is based on each facility's previous audit rating and priority classification (risk level). This means that facilities that rate well ("A" rating) are audited less frequently than those that receive a lower rating ("C" rating).

Audit components

Audits cover the following eight elements:

	Audit element	Audit component
1	Food safety program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flow chart• Hazard analysis• Hazard audit table (or program based on 3.2.1 of the Food Standards Code)• Finished product specifications• Verification schedule and records
2	Construction & maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preventative maintenance• Premises, vehicles and equipment maintenance
3	Hygiene & sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Premises, vehicles and equipment
4	Process control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring records• In process controls
5	Product identification, traceability & recall	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labelling procedure• Recall program• Traceability program
6	Analytical & testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Product testing• Environmental testing• Water testing• Failed product test procedure
7	Prerequisite programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calibration• Pest control• Internal audit• Training• GMP/GHP/Personal hygiene policy• Approved supplier program• Allergen management program
8	Corrective action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The facility did not implement effective corrective action after the last audit



Facilities' compliance rating

If an auditor identifies any issues, a Corrective Action Request (CAR) is raised for each issue identified.

A CAR is rated 'minor', 'major' or 'critical' based on the level of risk to food safety and points are allocated accordingly.

Rating	Points
Minor	2
Major	8
Critical	64

Points for the CARs raised are added to give an overall compliance rating for the facility: A, B, C, D, or E. This will guide the frequency of future audits.

Audit	Audit score	Audit outcome
A	0 – 15	Acceptable
B	16 – 31	Acceptable
C	32 – 47	Marginal
D	48 – 63	Unacceptable
E	64 and above	Unacceptable

Frequency of audits

Rating	Priority 1 (e.g. aged care)	Priority 2 (e.g. dairy farm)
A	12 months	24 months
B	6 months	12 months
C	3 months	6 months
D	1 month	
E	1 month or more frequently if required	1 month or more frequently if required

Example audit score

No.	Audit element	CAR	Points
1	Food safety program	Minor	2
2	Construction and maintenance	–	–
3	Hygiene & sanitation	Major	8
4	Process control	Major	8
5	Product identification, traceability & recall	–	–
6	Analytical & testing	–	–
7	Prerequisite programs	Major	8
8	Corrective action	–	–
		SCORE	26

In this example audit, the rating would be a "B" and the next audit for this facility would be due in:

Rating	Priority 1 (e.g. aged care)	Priority 2 (e.g. dairy farm)
B	6 months	12 months

CAR escalations policy

If a facility is issued with a minor CAR and it is not corrected by the time of the follow up audit, the issue may be escalated to a major CAR.

If a major CAR is not corrected by the time of the next audit, it may be escalated to a critical CAR.

When a CAR is escalated, a major CAR may also be issued under the 'Corrective action' audit element, as the business failed to take the appropriate corrective action.

Regulatory food safety auditors

Regulatory audits can be conducted by officers employed by the NSW Food Authority (Food Authority) or by auditors approved by the Food Authority under its Regulatory Food Safety Auditor System providing the facility has also been approved for audit under the Regulatory Food Safety Auditor system.

All regulatory food safety auditors need to meet the standards detailed in the National Auditor Framework. Details of auditor competencies are contained in the *Regulatory Food Safety Auditor Manual* available on our website (link below).

Benefits of using a regulatory food safety auditor include:

- audits are scheduled at a time that suits the food business
- the same auditor can perform all audits
- once an auditor becomes familiar with the business' systems, it may take less time to conduct the audit
- a large business group may contract one auditor to do all of its audits
- it may reduce the costs associated with audits.

Regulatory food safety auditors do not have the powers of an authorised officer employed by the Food Authority but can rate an audit as 'unacceptable'. Details of all audit results are provided to the Food Authority who will follow up on any audits which have been rated as 'unacceptable'.

Regulatory food safety auditors only audit a food business at the level that they are approved e.g. general auditor, high risk audits with approved scopes. An approved auditor must not audit food businesses outside of their approved scope.

They may also only audit food businesses approved to use the system.

The register of approved auditors is available on the Food Authority's website.

Applying to use the Regulatory Food Safety Auditor System

Businesses need to apply to the Food Authority for approval to move to this system. After completing the application form, the Food Authority will then assess eligibility.

More information

This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses need to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW) and regulations.

For more:

- visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry
- phone our helpline: 1300 552 406
- download the [Regulatory Food Safety Auditor Manual](#)
- download the [Guide to Develop a Food Safety Program](#)
- review the [Priority Classification System](#)
- Look for an approved auditor on the Auditor Register

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

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