

**INTERNATIONAL FIRE SERVICE ACCREDITATION CONGRESS**

**Certificate Assembly**

# **Accreditation Procedures**

**Prepared by the  
IFSAC Certificate Assembly Committee on Site Teams**

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## **IFSAC Certificate Assembly Accreditation Procedures**

Five (5) years from the date of election to membership, each voting entity must have at least one level of certification accredited. The Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) shall evaluate the entity's status at that time and report to the Assembly.

Reaccreditation is required on a five (5) year basis. The five (5) year period begins at the time of the initial accreditation received by the entity.

**NOTE 1:** If an entity wishes to have a standard other than NFPA accredited, they must first submit the standard to the Standards Review Committee through IFSAC Administration. To ensure the Committee and the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors are adequately prepared for decision-making, Administration requires all submissions arrive in their office no later than sixty (60) days prior to the CABOG meeting. The Committee will review the standard and make a recommendation to the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors. The standard may then be adopted by the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors or forwarded on to the Certificate Assembly for further discussion and/or adoption.

**NOTE 2:** Site visits occurring less than 45 days prior to a regularly scheduled Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) meeting will be placed on the agenda of the CABOG's next meeting following the meeting occurring directly after the site visit. For example, a site visit conducted in March that is less than 45 days from a CABOG meeting scheduled in April, will be placed on the agenda for the CABOG's next meeting scheduled in October.

### **12 Months Prior to When Site Visit is Due**

IFSAC Administration will send notification to entities twelve (12) months prior to when a site visit is due.

### **6 Months Prior to When Site Visit is Due**

Entities will be required to provide tentative site visit dates no less than six (6) months prior to when the site visit is due to IFSAC Administration. Once tentative site visit dates are received, IFSAC Administration will schedule and facilitate the site visit, in consultation with the selected site team leader and entity host.

### **120 Days Prior to Scheduled Site Visit**

An application for accreditation/reaccreditation and all required documentation must be completed and submitted by the entity to IFSAC Administration no less than 120 days prior to the scheduled site visit. The documentation submitted by the entity shall include:

- Evidence of empowerment
- Documentation showing financial support (source(s) of funding) for the continuous operation of the certification process.

- Documentation that indicates staffing levels adequate to implement and sustain the certification process described
- A completed application package in accordance with the list provided:
  - Application for Accreditation
  - Completed *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation*
  - Test item correlation sheets in the IFSAC format
  - Performance skill evaluation sheets or other methodologies used
  - Certification policies and procedures manual
- Any culturally sensitive information that the entity feels the site team should know.
- An application fee of \$1000 (US) for accreditation or reaccreditation (may be invoiced)

Administration will review the application package to ensure that all documents have been submitted and are complete, that there is evidence of empowerment, and the entity is in good standing with the organization.

Administration forwards the documents to the site team leader for technical review. The technical review should include ensuring that all correlation sheets for the levels applied for are correct and completed as required, criteria worksheets are completed and properly referenced, and that the entity's policies manual addresses the Certificate Assembly Accreditation Criteria. At least 60 days prior to the site visit, the site team leader shall complete the review and notify IFSAC Administration of whether the site visit should proceed as scheduled.

If your entity is not able to meet the above deadline, it is advisable that your entity submit a written request for an extension to IFSAC Administration. The request should include reasons for why the entity was not able to have a site visit by the due date, as well as a brief explanation of the efforts being made to prepare for and schedule a site visit.

### **60 Days Prior to Scheduled Site Visit**

After the site team leader has completed his/her review of the entity's documents, the entity and site team members will be notified by IFSAC Administration about whether the site visit will proceed as scheduled. This should occur no less than sixty (60) days prior to the scheduled site visit so travel arrangements can be finalized as soon as possible.

Copies of all supplied materials will be forwarded from the entity seeking accreditation or reaccreditation to the site team members. The site team leader will develop and supply team members with a site visit agenda. The entity will supply the travel agenda, directions to the facility, and program information.

Any items on the *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation* that can be answered in advance should be

completed prior to arrival at the entity. A pre-visit list of questions should be started prior to the site team's pre-visit meeting.

### **Site Visit**

The site team shall examine all aspects of the applicant's certification system in relation to and to ensure compliance with the *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation*.

When the team arrives at the entity site, there should be a pre-visit team meeting prior to starting the formal process. This will allow the team to work out the details concerning the visit while allowing for discussion on issues already discovered. The site team leader is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the site visit are carried out during the visit. Should difficulties arise, the site team leader should contact the chairperson of the CABOG and/or IFSAC Administration.

Once the review is completed the site team must hold an exit conference during which the visit is discussed with the entity. When the team ends the visit and departs from the entity, there should be no surprises concerning the visit brought out in the report or in discussion from the team that the entity is not already aware.

### **30 Days Following Site Visit**

Within thirty (30) days of the site visit, the site team leader shall prepare and submit to the Administration Office, the completed IFSAC Site Visit Report that includes at least:

- (A) Evaluation documentation as provided for in the *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation*.
- (B) A narrative report of findings.
- (C) A recommendation to:
  - (1) Accredited certification levels applied for.
  - (2) Accredited only certain levels.
  - (3) Accredited levels conditionally upon further action by the applicant.

A recommendation by the site team for conditional accreditation shall include specific details as to what the condition(s) must be met prior to the granting of accreditation, and how completion of the conditions will be measured. Documentation submitted by the applicant to meet the condition(s) shall be reviewed by all members of the site team within thirty (30) days of submission. Upon review of the documentation, the site team leader has thirty (30) days to submit a final report through the Administration Office to the Board containing a recommendation either to grant or deny accreditation.

- (4) Deny accreditation.
- (5) Any combination of these actions deemed appropriate by the site team.

- (D) Any voluntary recommendations that are in order for the applicant, but not required for accreditation.

Upon receipt of a site visit report, Administration will distribute to all members of the CABOG. Administration shall place consideration of the report on the agenda of the next CABOG meeting.

If the *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation* are met, the site team shall recommend to the CABOG that accreditation be granted.

If, in the opinion of the site team, the criteria have not been met, the site team, through Administration, shall report this to the CABOG. The CABOG shall determine if additional time should be afforded to comply or the certificate accreditation should be withdrawn.

### **Adding Levels to Accreditation Status Between Site Visits**

Members with at least one accredited level may add certification levels to their accreditation between site visits by submitting an application form to the Administration Office with appropriate documentation that complies with the *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation*. Administrative reviews will be carried out according to the *IFSAC Certificate Assembly Administrative Review Procedure*.

### **Appeals Process**

The appeals process can be found in Article 12.3 Appeal Process of the Certificate Assembly Bylaws.

### **Site Team**

The site team for initial accreditation or reaccreditation shall consist of a minimum of three (3) personnel. The only exception would be for reaccreditation site visits that have five (5) or fewer levels of accreditation - the site team shall consist of a minimum of two (2) personnel.

The site team will be selected by IFSAC Administration from a list of qualified members. Member qualification is outlined in the Site Team Visit Information document.

### **Travel Procedures for the Site Team**

Costs for site visits are the responsibility of the host entity seeking accreditation. Generally, travel arrangements for the site visit team are the responsibility of the host entity with a few exceptions:

- IFSAC Administration will confirm with the host entity prior to the site visit whether the entity's travel process will involve the site visit team members completing any U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS), or equivalent, documentation or forms for the host entity; or whether any IRS, or equivalent, documentation or forms will be filed upon completion of the site visit by the entity for travel reimbursement paid to site visit team members. IFSAC site visit team members are volunteering their time to conduct site visits and are not paid for time or services to conduct site visits. The only payment made to site visit team members shall be for reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses related to the site visit.

- Only if this documentation is required by the host entity, IFSAC Administration will coordinate travel arrangements for the site visit team and invoice the applicant entity for the travel-related expenses. This includes but is not limited to airfare, lodging, per diem, mileage, baggage fees, etc. IFSAC Administration will follow Oklahoma State University's (OSU) travel policies and procedures when arranging travel for site visits, including adhering to methods and rates established for reimbursement.
- If completion or submission of IRS, or equivalent, documents or forms, by site visit team members is not required, or any IRS, or equivalent, documentation or forms will not be filed by the host entity for each site visit team member upon completion of the site visit, then the host entity is fully responsible for working directly with the site visit team to arrange air travel, lodging/hotel accommodations, transportation to and from airport, and notifying the site visit team of the entity's reimbursement process.
- By accepting assignment as a member of a site visit team, the member is agreeing to the reimbursement policy and procedure of the host entity or OSU.
- Members traveling internationally should coordinate with the host entity well in advance of travel to verify international travel requirements and restrictions (e.g., Visa).

The purpose of the reimbursement process is to ensure that site visit team members are expeditiously reimbursed for all reasonable expenses. Site visit team members are to be provided the proper forms and the reimbursement process should be made as simple as possible. Site visit team members are entitled to receive payment for all direct travel related expenses. Site visit team members do not receive compensation for their time or services.

Site visit team members should be reimbursed directly within 45 days following submission of appropriate expense vouchers, receipts, and/or forms. Rates and methods of reimbursement (mileage, lodging, per diem) for travel arranged and reimbursed directly by the host entity are based upon local regulations to which the host entity must adhere. Host entities should also provide prepaid airline tickets to site visit team members and/or arrange for direct billing of lodging and/or meals. Lodging facilities must be equipped with full automatic sprinkler protection. The extent to which these arrangements are made is the prerogative of the host entity.

## **Site Team Duties**

### *Pre-Visit Duties*

- Travel arrangements must be confirmed between the entity and the site team. The entity forwards the travel agendas to the site team members.
- The site team leader contacts the entity to formalize the site visit agenda.
- The site team leader contacts site team members to inform them what materials to bring and of the site visit agenda. The site team leader sends team members a copy of the site visit agenda and the meeting ground rules.
- The site visit team leader makes a final move or not move forward call for the visit.

### *Pre-Visit Meeting*

- The site team leader shall ensure the agenda includes at least one hour for the site team to meet prior to the start of the site visit.
- The site team leader will discuss the site visit agenda, the site visit ground rules, the IFSAC Site Team Code of Ethics, and team member assignments.
- The site team will discuss any pre-visit findings.
- The team will have a general discussion about the site visit approach.

### *The Site Visit*

- The site team will meet with entity representatives and the site team leader will begin the site visit accreditation process.
- The site team leader will facilitate the site visit process. As a minimum, the site visit shall include the following:
  - Meet with entity leadership and certification staff
  - Review support services
  - Review test banks
  - Interview staff and applicants of the certification system
  - Observe testing procedures
  - Tour the facilities, if applicable
- The site team shall conduct a pre-exit conference for team members first and then with entity representatives.
- The site team leader shall conduct an exit conference on the site visit results with team members and entity representatives.

### *Post-Visit Duties*

- The site team shall allow the entity to respond to findings provided in the exit conference.
- The site team leader shall submit the signed, completed site visit report to Administration within thirty (30) days of the site visit. Any unresolved issues from the visit shall be contained in the report.
- The site team leader shall work with the entity, and other team members to facilitate the review of additional material after the report is filed. If the site team determines that the



site visit report requires modifications, then the site team leader shall amend the report and submit it to Administration.

- Administration will forward the report and any amendments, if applicable, to the CABOG.