


	<b>Prime Certification &amp; Inspection</b>			
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<b>Title</b>	<b>Guidelines for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting Certified Organizations</b>			
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<b>Prepared by</b>	<b>Technical Manager</b>		<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Certification Manager</b>

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## 1. Introduction

In a normal business environment, every organization is continuously exposed to opportunities, challenges, and risks. However, extraordinary events or circumstance beyond the control of the organization happen. In such a circumstance, Prime C&I have a process for the proper maintenance of accreditation and certification in accordance with the guidelines outlined as per IAF ID 3: 2011.

It is important for Prime C&I to be able:

- To demonstrate reasonable due diligence, mutual understanding and trust and
- To establish an appropriate course of actions in response to extraordinary events.

The objective of the document is to provide to Prime C&I guidance on the appropriate course of action. This document is not intended to override requirements in standards or schemes. Where a standard or scheme provides no flexibility regardless of the crises that has occurred, guidance and an agreed way ahead will always be sought from the relevant accreditation body or scheme owner.

Note: The Technical Manager / Certification Manager and other appropriate resources, is responsible for periodic review and update of these guidelines.

## 2. Scope

This informative document is primarily applicable for all types of product certifications & management systems certifications.

## 3. Definition


### 3.1 Extraordinary event or circumstance

A circumstance beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as “Force Majeure” or “Act of God”. Examples are war, strike, riot, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crime, pandemic, flooding, earthquake, malicious computer hacking, other natural or man-made disasters.

## 4. Extraordinary Event or Circumstance Affecting a Certified Organization

An extraordinary event affecting a certified organization may temporarily prevent the Prime C&I from carrying out planned audits on-site. When such a situation occurs, Prime C&I operating under recognized standards or regulatory documents need to establish (in consultation with certified organizations) a reasonable planned course of action.

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Prime C&I will assess the risks of continuing certification and establish a documented policy and process, outlining the steps it will take in the event a certified organization is affected by an extraordinary event. The established policy and process of the Prime C&I will define methods for evaluating the current and expected future situation of the certified organization and define alternate potential short-term methods of assessing the organization to verify continuing effectiveness of its management systems.

To enable Prime C&I to assess risk for continuing certification and understand the certified organization's current and expected future situation, Prime C&I will gather necessary information from the certified organization before deciding on an appropriate course of action. The information collected by Prime C&I will include the following as appropriate:

- When will the organization be able to function normally?
- When will the organization be able to ship products or perform the service defined within the current scope of certification?
- Will the organization need to use alternative manufacturing and/or distribution or sites? If so, are these currently covered under the current certification or will they need to be evaluated?
- Does existing inventory still meet customer specifications or will the certified organization contact its customers regarding possible concessions?
- If the certified organization is certified to a management system standard that requires a disaster recovery plan or emergency response plan, has the certified organization implemented the plan and was it effective?
- Will some of the processes and/or services performed or products shipped be subcontracted to other organizations? If so, how will the other organizations activities be controlled by the certified organization?
- To what extent has operation of the management system been affected?
- Has the Certified organization conducted an impact assessment?
- Identification of alternative sampling sites, as appropriate.

If the risk of continuing certification is low and based on the collected information the Prime C&I has to consider alternative short-term methods of assessment to verify continuing system effectiveness for the organization. This may include requesting relevant documentation (for example, management review meeting minutes, corrective action records, results of internal audits, test/inspection reports, etc.) to be reviewed off site by the Prime C&I to determine continuing suitability of the certification (on a short-term basis only). At a minimum, the process will address the following items:

- Proactive communication between the affected certified organization and the Prime C&I.
- Steps the Prime C&I will take to assess the affected organization and how the plan to move forward will be communicated.

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- Specifying the maximum time an alternative short-term assessment method could be used before suspension or withdrawal of certification
- Criteria for renewing normal oversight, including the method and timing of any reinstatement activities and assessments.
- Possible amendments to organization's oversight plans on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with CAB procedures.
- Ensuring that any deviation from accreditation requirements and Prime C&I procedures is justified and documented, and agreement reached with the AB on plans to address temporary deviations from requirements.
- Re-establishment of surveillance/recertification activities according to Prime C&I oversight plans when access to the affected location is re-established.

If contact with the organization cannot be made, Prime C&I will follow normal processes and procedures for suspension and withdrawal of certification.

When developing alternate short-term methods of assessment, Prime C&I will take into consideration the following limitations:

#### a) First Surveillance Audit

Normally, the first surveillance audit after initial certification is to be within 12 months of the last day of the initial stage 2 audit (ISO/IEC 17021:2011, 9.3.2.2). However, providing that sufficient evidence has been collected as above, to provide confidence that the certified management system is effective consideration may be given to postpone the first surveillance for a period not normally exceeding 6 months (18 months from date of initial certification). Otherwise the certificate has to be suspended or the scope reduced.


#### b) Subsequent Surveillance Audits

There may be specific circumstances by which Prime C&I can justify adjusting the timing of a subsequent surveillance audit. If an organization has to shut down completely for a limited period of time (less than 6 months), it would be reasonable for a Prime C&I to postpone an audit that had been scheduled to occur during the shutdown until the organization resumes operations. The organization will inform the Prime C&I when operations resume so that the Prime C&I can conduct the audit promptly.

#### c) Recertification Audits

Normally the recertification audit must be completed, and the recertification decision made prior to expiration to avoid loss of certification (ISO/IEC 17021:2011, 9.1.1.2). However, providing that sufficient evidence has been collected as above, to provide confidence that the certified management system is effective consideration may be given to extend the certification for a period not normally exceeding 6 months beyond the original expiry date.

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The re-certification will be carried out within this permissible extended period. Otherwise, a new initial audit will be performed. The expiration of the renewed certification will be based on the original recertification cycle.

#### d) Information to the AB

All deviations from the established certification program will be justified, documented and made available to ABs upon request.

### 5. Extraordinary Event or Circumstance Affecting Prime C&I

An extraordinary event affecting Prime C&I may temporarily prevent the AB from carrying out planned assessments on-site. When these situations occur, ABs and Prime C&I operating within their accreditation need to establish a reasonable planned course of action.

The AB will assess the risks of continuing accreditation and establish a documented policy and process, outlining the steps it will take in the event when accredited CABs are affected by an extraordinary event or circumstances. The established policy and process of the AB will define methods to evaluate the current and expected future situation of Prime C&I and define alternate potential short term methods of assessment to verify continuing system effectiveness. The AB will also define in the procedures the required reporting and communication activities with the

#### Prime C&I

The Prime C&I's communication with its AB will contain, at least, an evaluation of the Prime C&I's current and expected future situation. The following information will be provided by the Prime C&I to the AB as appropriate:

- Scope and extent of the affected services and business areas and sites.
- Number of affected clients.
- When will the Prime C&I be able to function normally within the current scope of accreditation?
- Does Prime C&I has plan to outsource some of its activities or operate in alternatives sites to ensure business continuity? If so, are these currently covered under the current accreditation or will they need to be evaluated by the AB?
- Proactive communication between affected certified organizations and Prime C&I
- Is IAF MD 4 "IAF Mandatory Document for the use of Computer Assisted Auditing Techniques ("CAAT") for Accredited Certification of Management Systems" applied?
- Steps Prime C&I will take to assess those affected organizations and how the plan to move forward will be communicated to the certified organizations.
- Possible amendments to each certified organization's oversight plans on a case by case basis and in

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accordance with Prime C&I procedures.

- Ensuring that any deviation from accreditation requirements and Prime C&I procedures is justified and documented, and written agreement reached with AB (if deviation from an accreditation requirement is requested) on plans to address temporary deviations from requirements.
- Re-establishment of surveillance/recertification activities according to Prime C&I oversight plans when access to the area is re-established.

### 5.1 Breakdown of Prime C&I

This may occur when Prime C&I has not been able to recuperate from the extraordinary event or circumstances that affected Prime C&I's business, and therefore, is no longer able or authorized to offer its accredited service, either completely or in part (breakdown of Prime C&I). The same applies to liquidation or bankruptcy. In these cases Prime C&I is obliged to inform its AB immediately. Under these circumstances, Prime C&I and the ABs (NABCB & EIAC) will cooperate in facilitating the transition to other CAB(s) for the currently certified organizations in accordance with IAF MD2 IAF Mandatory Document for the Transfer of Accredited Certification of Management Systems.

## 6. Reference

- IAF Informative Document for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations, Issue 1 - (IAF ID 3: 2011).

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