

FAQ - NPCA Plant Certification Audits During COVID-19

NPCA is committed to protecting plant personnel, auditors and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of that effort, NPCA's QA/QC Committee has approved modified guidelines for NPCA Plant Certification Program audits through the remainder of 2020. Highlights of these guidelines are below. Beginning Jan. 1, 2021, standard operating procedures for the NPCA Plant Certification Program will resume unless otherwise approved by the NPCA QA/QC Committee and NPCA Board of Directors.

When will plant audits resume?

Plant audits will resume beginning Monday, July 6, 2020.

Will NPCA allow a waiver for annual testing from third parties with the new restart date?

Plants that use a third-party testing service or laboratory for annual testing and calibration requirements, such as batching scales, water meters, admixture batching equipment, compression test machines, temperature recorders, three-edge-bearing test machines, vacuum and hydrostatic testing equipment, concrete absorption, step testing, and other machine calibrations, will receive a 90-day waiver on testing and calibrations. The waiver begins on Monday, July 6, 2020, and ends on Monday, Oct. 5, 2020. Plants audited within these dates must provide up-to-date documentation by Oct. 5, 2020.

Should you have any questions, please contact Phillip Cutler, P.E., director of quality assurance programs, at 800-366-7731 or pcutler@precast.org.

How will NPCA plant audits differ for the remainder of this year?

NPCA Certification audits in 2020 will be one of two types: in-plant or virtual.

How does a virtual plant audit work?

Virtual plant audits will be conducted using the current NPCA Quality Control Manual for Precast Concrete Plant Certification grading schedule. Plants may upload documents to the NPCA Plant Certification Producer Portal for the auditor to access or use Dropbox, email or other similar technology. Plants may expect phone and video interview(s) throughout the audit day, along with opening and closing meetings. All documents requested by the auditor must be provided to the auditor by the end of the audit. Late documents will not be accepted.



How do I access NPCA's Plant Certification Portal?

To access the NPCA Plant Certification Producer Portal, go to precast.org/producer-portal. If you have a login and password, click on "Producer Portal."

If you do not have a login and password, click on "Request a Login," and the information will be sent to you. You also may view a tutorial outlining how to use the Producer Portal at the same link.

How will audits be graded?

All audits, including virtual and in-person, will be graded as outlined in the NPCA Quality Control Manual for Precast Concrete Plant Certification based on documentation provided by the plant and phone/video interviews by the third-party agency personnel.

Will the audit scoring requirements change?

All audits will continue to be scored with the current grading schedule checklist published in February 2020.

Will I receive a preliminary report the day of the inspection?

All plants will receive a preliminary audit report via email on the day of the audit.

What equipment will my plant need for a virtual audit?

Plants will need a smart phone or tablet with video capability. The plant also will need to have strong Wi-Fi or cellular service connectivity. Plants may download the free Zoom app or use FaceTime or other similar video conferencing services for the virtual audit. Please test your service and video conferencing prior to the audit.

How is NPCA protecting auditors and plant personnel during in-plant audits?

NPCA auditors are required to follow all CDC guidelines for COVID-19, as well as any federal, state and local requirements. Additionally, auditors will adhere to all safety guidelines set by the plant. If you have any special requirements for your plant visitors, please contact NPCA by July 2, 2020.



How will plants be selected for a virtual or in-plant audit?

NPCA will be conducting as many in-plant audits as possible in 2020. All currently certified plants are eligible for virtual or in-person audits for their annual audit. Additionally, these plants are subject to a random re-inspection per the Plant Certification Program terms and conditions. Random re-inspections may be virtual or in-person. All plants new to the NPCA Plant Certification Program shall receive an in-person audit.

NPCA will work with audit agencies, DOTs and stakeholders within the confines of COVID-19 travel and access restrictions to determine which plants will receive virtual or in-person audits. If a plant requests an in-plant audit, NPCA will make every effort to accommodate the request but cannot guarantee an in-plant audit. Decisions will be made based on the resources available, travel restrictions and program requirements. Plants may not request a virtual audit only.

Will NPCA conduct random audits in 2020?

Regular annual random audits will be performed in 2020 and may be virtual or in-plant.

What if a plant does not respond to a virtual audit or refuses an auditor for an in-plant audit?

A non-response to an auditor's phone and/or email contacts for a virtual audit, a refusal to participate in the virtual or in-person audit, or no production taking place on the day of an in-plant audit will be grounds for decertification of the plant, per the NPCA Quality Control Manual for Precast Concrete Plants terms and conditions. Plants are asked to provide a minimum of three different accessible plant employees and their phone numbers by July 2, 2020, so that NPCA and auditors have multiple options for contact the day of the audit. It is the plant's responsibility to be accessible for a virtual or in-person audit Monday through Friday, except for the following dates: July 3, Sept. 7, Oct. 12, Nov. 3, Nov. 26-27 and Dec. 21-31. If your plant will be shut down for additional days, the plant must provide NPCA with a 14-calendar-day advance notice.

Will DOTs be permitted to shadow audits?

Per NPCA's Plant Certification Program terms and conditions, DOTs, other owner stakeholders and NPCA staff may shadow audits at any time without prior notice to the plant. This includes virtual audits.

Additional Questions

Please contact Phillip Cutler, director of quality assurance programs, at pcutler@precast.org or (317) 582-2420 with additional questions.

