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## What you need to know about Unannounced SQF Audits

Within three certification cycles, the certification body, also known as a CB, will conduct one unannounced recertification audit of your facility as outlined in the SQF Code, part A, section 4.3 and 4.4. The unannounced audit will occur in the facility within the sixty day re-certification window (i.e., the anniversary date of the initial certification audit +/- thirty days). The unannounced audit year will be determined between you and your CB. Be aware that if you change CBs, your unannounced re-certification audit schedule will not change.

Your facility can choose not to have the unannounced audit conducted during your first recertification audit. SQF allows you to identify blackout dates to indicate when the facility will not be in operation for legitimate business reasons.

All attempts to view the production of products included in the scope of certification will be made by the auditor. If products are not running during the unannounced audit, the document records, employee interviews and observations of like product(s) will be conducted.

During the unannounced recertification audit the auditor will:

- Share their identification card and authorization from the CB
- Conduct a tour of the facility within the first 60 minutes of arrival at the facility.
- Review the supplier's schedule to verify that the facility's identified blackout dates are valid.

In the event that your facility refuses the unannounced audit to occur, the CB will immediately suspend your facility's SQF Certificate. In order to get recertified, another unannounced audit must occur.

### Facility Tips:

**Understand:** Determine the unannounced audit year with the CB and understand the recertification audit window and the length of the audit.

**Communicate:** Communicate to your CB in writing when the facility will NOT be running (ie blackout dates). This can be ongoing communication throughout the year and doesn't have to be limited to when the unannounced audit year is determined.

**Be Ready:** The facility should be audit ready at all times. The facility can save time and prepare for the unannounced audit by assembling documentation, records, and other essential information for an efficient audit during the recertification window. In the event that essential staff are absent during the unannounced audit, identify back-up personnel for key positions. Ensure that your receptionist/security/person in charge is aware that an auditor from the licensed certification body may arrive at the facility at any time during the recertification window. Ensure that the audit plan, audit duration and exit meeting date/time are confirmed at the opening meeting. There also needs to be a guide available for the auditor during the audit.

*Still have questions?* Feel free to call or email us at any time. We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.