



Crisis Management Guidance for the WLA-SCS

A guidance issued by the WLA SRMC to allow the execution of WLA-SCS certification assessments in case of critical situations.

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Introduction

This document constitutes guidance to address critical situations affecting the execution of WLA-SCS certification assessments.

This document is intended for:

- WLA members holding a WLA-SCS certificate.
- Assessment Service Entities (ASEs) affiliated with the WLA.
- Auditors providing WLA-SCS services.

This document does not impose any obligations. Nonetheless, it constitutes a basis for evaluating critical situations and for the WLA to take official decisions that may potentially supersede the regular rules established in the Guide to Certification (GtC) for the WLA-SCS.

Scope

The scope of WLA-SCS Crisis Management Guidance is to provide initial details that allow the flexible application of WLA-SCS rules in critical situations that affect the regular development of WLA-SCS audits already planned or to be planned.

Chapter 1 – Definition of critical situation

1. A critical situation refers to any circumstances beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as “Force Majeure” or “act of God”. Examples are war, strikes, riots, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crime, pandemics, flooding, earthquakes, malicious computer hacking, and other natural or man-made disasters.
2. A critical situation is recognized as such when it disrupts WLA member operability either partially or completely, making it difficult if not impossible to schedule and perform WLA-SCS assessments.

Chapter 2 – ASEs and auditors’ role

1. ASEs affiliated with the WLA are encouraged to have plans and procedures in place to quickly recognize and address any critical situation that may affect their own operability or those of certified WLA members, with consequential flow-on to audits.
2. Plans and procedures should outline steps, contact details, and tools to be used in case of crisis to guarantee the continuity of certification with a minimum level of risk.
3. When a critical situation affects an already scheduled assessment, or can potentially affect future assessments, ASEs and auditors must promptly inform the WLA and provide all available information to allow the monitoring of the situation.

Chapter 3 – Disruption of WLA members’ activities

1. When WLA member’s business operations are heavily or completely disrupted, or the WLA member is partially or totally unable to access or provide access to its premises owing to the critical situation, the WLA can recognize the following temporary deviations to the regular rules established in the GtC for the WLA-SCS.

Annual assessments

1. If neither on-site nor remote audits are possible, annual audits can be postponed until the critical situation is past and normal operations are restored both from the WLA member’s and the auditor’s side.
2. The annual audit’s postponement should not exceed 6 months from the expected audit that, according to the rules, must take place within 12 months from an initial or recertification audit and within 12 months from a first annual audit.
3. If after 6 months’ postponement it is not possible to perform the assessment, neither on-site or remotely, then during the subsequent annual assessment all controls must be assessed, taking into consideration the rules for recertification assessments.

4. If the annual assessment is not performed within 12 months from the expected date, the certificate is suspended until a new recertification assessment is performed.

Recertification assessments

1. If neither on-site nor remote assessments are possible, the WLA can recognize a special extension of the certificate validity.
2. The request for validity extension must be received by the WLA in a reasonable time prior to certificate expiration to avoid loss of certification.
3. The certificate validity extension cannot exceed 6 months from the original expiration date.
4. If the recertification assessment is not performed within 6 months of the original expiration date, the certificate is suspended until a new recertification assessment is performed.

General rules for temporary deviations

1. Deviations to regular rules are acceptable only for annual assessments and recertification assessments.
2. Initial assessments are not recommended during critical situations.
3. Deviations to regular rules can be recognized by the WLA provided that sufficient evidence about a critical situation is provided by the auditor.
4. Any official decisions taken by the WLA that supersede regular rules must be written and signed by WLA management. Without an official decision and communication from the WLA, any deviation from regular rules can lead to the application of invalidity clauses included in the GtC for the WLA-SCS.

Chapter 4 – Disruption of ASEs and auditors' services

1. When the activities of ASEs or auditors selected to perform WLA-SCS audits are partially or totally disrupted, and an already selected auditor is unable to perform on-site or remote audits owing to the critical situation, the WLA member can decide to select a different ASE and/or auditor.
2. In such a case, the WLA can grant a 3 months postponement for annual audits or 3 months certificate validity extension provided the following conditions are true:
 - a. The ASE or auditor's operability is affected by a demonstrated critical situation.
 - b. The ASE is unable to replace the auditor in due time.
 - c. The acknowledgement of the ASE's or auditor's inability to perform the audits happens less than one month before the scheduled audit.
3. The same applies in case of liquidation or bankruptcy of the ASE.

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