

COVID-19 MarinTrust Programme Policy

VERSION 1.4 0 04 May 2021

This Policy supersedes and replaces our earlier notifications of VERSION 1.3 31 March 2021

This Policy is valid from publication date during the COVID-19 Global Pandemic until further notice.

This Policy will be reviewed and amended where applicable in accordance with the changing nature of the pandemic. Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies (CBs) shall ensure that they are using the most up-to-date guidance and requirements.

Background

The MarinTrust programme has declared that, following the guidance of IAF (International Accreditation Forum) **Document ID 3:2011** "Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organisations", it has invoked its **Process on Handling Remote MarinTrust Factory and MarinTrust Chain of Custody Audits during Extraordinary Events of Circumstances with immediate effect due the COVID-19 outbreak.**

Scope

This policy is normative for all MarinTrust audits. See details for options and scenarios.

All other normative requirements *not* related to the new policy remain applicable.

Certification suspensions **may not** be lifted using a remote audit.

MarinTrust Auditing Options and Scenarios

MarinTrust has agreed that for all MarinTrust audits to either its Factory Standard or its Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard the following requirements shall be followed by its approved CBs.

Prior to any remote audit being undertaken the CB should use MarinTrust's procedure entitled '*Risk assessment to be conducted by CBs prior to undertaking remote audits on facilities currently certified to the MarinTrust standards*', to determine the conditions of the remote audit for each MarinTrust certified facility depending on the risk assessment outcome.

1. All certified sites shall be required to have the annual **surveillance audit** to maintain the continuity of their certificate for either the MarinTrust Factory Standard or the MarinTrust

CoC Standard. Where an onsite audit is not possible in affected areas¹, the CB shall conduct a Risk Assessment and follow guidance in table 1.

2. All **recertification applicants** to either the MarinTrust Factory Standard or MarinTrust Chain of Custody Standard whose certification is due to expire within the validity date of this policy, shall have their current certificate extended by a period of up to 6 months by their CB from the date of certificate expiry. If an onsite audit cannot be completed within this time, the CB shall conduct a Risk Assessment and follow guidance in table 1.
3. For all **new applicants** to the MarinTrust programme these shall be processed and made audit ready until the CB can execute the audit onsite following the agreed certification procedures and requirements. All new applications to either standard shall have their onsite audit postponed until the travel restrictions for the relevant location have been relaxed sufficiently to allow an approved auditor to conduct an on-site audit at these new facilities in a manner that is not imposing any COVID-19 related safety issues to the auditor or the applicant. CBs will be expected to arrange on-site audits as soon as possible after relevant restrictions are lifted.

¹ “Affected areas” are considered those countries, provinces, territories or cities experiencing ongoing transmission of COVID-19, in contrast to areas reporting only imported cases.”

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice>

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Table 1 Remote audit requirements for CBs to follow depending on the final risk categorisation.

		Audit type	
		Surveillance	Re-certification
Risk	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit(s) can be conducted remotely, with video technology with an interactive capability. If 2 consecutive surveillance audits have been conducted remotely, the next recertification audit will be required to be onsite. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit(s) can be conducted remotely, with video technology with an interactive capability if only the 1 previous surveillance audit was conducted remotely. The next audit will be required to be onsite to verify MarinTrust clause requirements that cannot be verified (or only partially verified) remotely. Where the 2 previous surveillance audits were conducted remotely, the recertification audit must be onsite.
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit can be conducted remotely if the previous audit was conducted onsite. However, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an onsite audit must be conducted within 6-months to provide assurance that clause requirements not able to be assessed (or only partially verified) remotely are fully complied with. If during the remote audit it was possible to fully verify all clauses of the relevant standard the following onsite audit shall follow the normal audit frequency of 12 months and must be conducted onsite. Where the previous audit was conducted remotely, a second remote audit may be conducted remotely provided the video technology used at the previous audit allowed all criteria to be assessed fully. The next audit shall be conducted onsite within 12 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit can be conducted remotely if the previous audit was conducted onsite. However, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an onsite audit must be conducted within 6-months to provide assurance that clause requirements not able to be assessed (or only partially verified) remotely are fully complied with. If during the remote audit it was possible to fully verify all clauses of the relevant standard the following onsite audit shall follow the normal audit frequency of 12 months and must be conducted onsite. Where the previous audit was conducted remotely, a second remote audit may be conducted remotely provided the video technology used at the previous audit allowed all criteria to be assessed fully. The next audit shall be conducted onsite within 12 months.
	High	Audit cannot be undertaken remotely, however, the CB may contact MarinTrust secretariat directly to discuss options if applicable.	Audit cannot be undertaken remotely, the CB may contact MarinTrust secretariat directly to discuss options if applicable.

MarinTrust will make a note alongside the applicant certificate on the website that the audit was carried out remotely.

Certificate holders may apply to a CB to unilaterally cancel/postponed onsite audits due to Covid-19 concerns, however evidence and justification must be provided in order to sufficiently substantiate

the cancellation or postponement. This evidence and justification will be kept in the certification file by the CB.

Unannounced audits

At all stages throughout the auditing process MarinTrust will allow the CB the right to undertake additional ad-hoc and/or unannounced audits if the CB feels additional verification of a particular facility is required to ensure that the intent of the MarinTrust standards are being maintained. To trigger one of these unannounced audits the CB shall inform the MarinTrust Secretariat with their reasons for requiring to use this additional verification mechanism and this must be conducted within 6 months of the remote onsite audit.

Subcontracted Facilities

All subcontracted facilities with an audit history under MarinTrust shall qualify for remote audit unless the main facility for certification is high risk.

Subcontracted facilities must be included in the remote audit request form submitted to MarinTrust for prior approval in order to undergo remote audits.

Subcontracting facilities with no previous audit history under the MarinTrust Programme will not be permitted to undergo remote audits. These shall constitute as a 'new subcontracting facility' and must undergo an onsite audit.

Section 3.1 and Section 3.2 of the MarinTrust Standard

GMP+ Certification:

For certified MarinTrust sites that:

- a) use an approved MarinTrust GMP+ standard as evidence to meet the requirements in section 3.1 of the MarinTrust Factory Standard, and
- b) the validity of this GMP+ certification has also been affected by Covid-19 pandemic.

These sites shall be contacted directly by their CB to determine the most appropriate course of action based on their individual circumstances which shall be agreed with the MarinTrust Secretariat before proceeding.

FEMAS certification:

For certified MarinTrust sites that:

- a) use an approved MarinTrust FEMAS standard as evidence to meet the requirements in section 3.1 of the MarinTrust Factory Standard, and
- b) the validity of this FEMAS certification has also been affected by Covid-19 pandemic,

These sites shall be contacted directly by their CB to determine the most appropriate course of action based on their individual circumstances which shall be agreed with the MarinTrust Secretariat before proceeding.

PAC Certification

For certified MarinTrust sites that:

- a) use an approved MarinTrust PAC standard as evidence to meet the requirements in section 3.1 of the MarinTrust Factory Standard, and
- b) the validity of this PAC certification has also been affected by Covid-19 pandemic,

These sites shall be contacted directly by their CB to determine the most appropriate course of action based on their individual circumstances which shall be agreed with the MarinTrust Secretariat before proceeding.

Section 3.2 of the MarinTrust Standard

For certified MarinTrust sites that do not hold valid GMP+ , FEMAS or PAC certification and use compliance to criteria in section 3.2 of the MarinTrust standard, the auditing options and scenarios outlined in this document are to be followed by the CB.

Reporting

CBs shall report to MarinTrust on a monthly basis detailing how COVID has or is impacting audits for facilities. The reporting shall be in excel format and include information on all MarinTrust certification and include, as a minimum, the following information:

- Company name (*and plant name*)
- Certificate number
- Country
- Allocated auditor
- COVID impact (*full description*)
- Audit type
- Audit due date
- Audit conducted date (*if applicable*)
- New audit proposed date (*if applicable*)

Certificate Validity

The validity of certificates is retained during any lengthened recertification process. However, at the end of the extraordinary circumstances, the 3-year certification cycle will revert to its original schedule. Therefore, where the validity of the certificate has been retained during a lengthened recertification process the facility must undergo the required x2 surveillance and recertification audits within the 3-year certification cycle. This may result in audits being schedule prior to the 12-month audit frequency.

Thanks

MarinTrust at this time would like to thank accredited certification bodies, MarinTrust certified sites and key stakeholders for their patience and continued support of the programme.

Further Information

For further details, or if further clarification is required, please contact standards@marin-trust.com.

