

General Circular

General Circular 09/2020

Remote food safety auditing guidance

NSW Government advice in response to COVID-19 has resulted in travel and work restrictions in some regions. This has impacted audit arrangements where licensed facilities cannot operate or auditors are not permitted to travel.

The NSW Food Authority has developed a guidance document for regulatory food safety auditors who are approved under the *Food Act 2003* to conduct remote audits for some types of food businesses where there is limited or no access to food premises or food preparation areas due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Remote auditing will be available to the following licensed food businesses:

- Vulnerable persons facilities
- Cold food storage
- Dairy primary production
- Plant products
- Seafood processing
- Seafood processing – Ready-to-eat (RTE) products
- Seafood processing – RTE including wet storage
- Aquaculture with processing, excluding shellfish – RTE products

A remote audit will not be granted where it is deemed safe by an auditor to conduct an audit onsite.

Preparing for a remote audit

The [Remote Auditing Guide](#) outlines the processes for conducting a remote audit, clearly explaining the roles and responsibilities of food safety auditors and licensees who are granted a remote audit. It is the responsibility of the licensee to prepare technology, personnel and evidence as required by the auditor.

It is advised that an audit plan is supplied to the licensee before a remote audit, which should be flexible enough to allow for changes as the audit develops.

Conducting the Remote Audit

A successful remote audit relies on adequate internet, voice and video services to ensure communication between the auditor and licensee is stable.

Voice and video services will be used to collect evidence through one-to-one interviews, screen sharing to review documentation and records, and video observation of food safety processes. All evidence will be reviewed and reported to support the audit findings and conclusions.

Licensees should discuss any technological concerns or issues with the auditor before the remote audit is scheduled. In the event a remote audit is interrupted by technological issues, the licensee must reschedule by contacting the auditor or the NSW Food Authority Helpline on 1300 552 406.

A report will be provided once the remote audit is complete detailing the remote auditing methods used and will clarify the effectiveness of the audit in achieving the stated objectives.

Licensees completing food safety audits remotely can do so from **21 September to 31 December 2020**. As COVID-19 restrictions evolve, the NSW Food Authority will review the guidance document including before 31 December 2020 to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

More information

If you have questions about remote audits under the *Food Act 2003*, please contact the NSW Food Authority Helpline on 1300 552 406 or at food.contact@dpi.nsw.gov.au