

EMS Audit Procedures for NCCOS

Revised 01/27/2009

Introduction:

This short list identifies the set of standard “procedures” or “steps” that NCCOS will use to: 1) carry out Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Audits both internal and external, 2) respond to audit findings, and 3) track the follow-up action to meet the EMS objective of continual improvement. EMS Audits are different from other facilities audits in that they deal with what management “wants” to do with regard to being better stewards of our natural environment. Other facilities audits are concerned typically with what is required by law (i.e., what “has to be done”). These procedures supplement the specifics of ISO 14001 and its subsections and the NOAA EMS Standards to address the NCCOS internal mechanics of the EMS audit and tracking the results.

- **Step 1 – Annual Audit Plan:** An annual audit plan will be prepared by the NCCOS Environmental Management System Coordinator which will include information about the type of audit (internal or external), where, when, by whom, relevant information such as location of EMS references, checklists (NCCOS EMS Website), and audit emphasis. This plan will be discussed with the NCCOS Director. Once approved, it will be sent out to all NCCOS Center Directors under the Director’s signature with a copy to the NCCOS EMS Team. The Annual Plan should be sent out by the end of the first quarter of the fiscal year.
- **Step 2 – Plan for Specific Audit:** The Lead Auditor (internal and/or external) prepares an audit plan for the scheduled EMS audit based on the general guidance provided by the client (Director, NCCOS) in the annual audit plan.
- **Step 3 – Audit Executed:** The audit is conducted in accordance with ISO 14001, the NOAA EMS Standards, and the specific audit plan. In general the audit will focus on the three C’s – Conformance, Consistency, and Continual Improvement.
- **Step 4 – Audit Report:** Upon completion of the audit, a report will be submitted by the Lead Auditor to the Director, NCCOS, the Director(s) of the audited facility(ies), the NOS Environmental Management Representative, and the NCCOS Environmental Management Representative. The internal audit report should be delivered no later than 30 days after the audit is completed. External audit reports will be submitted pursuant to contract specifications.
- **Step 5 – Follow-up Action:** Not later than 30 days after receipt of the Report, the Director(s) of the audited facility(ies) will provide the Director, NCCOS, the NOS Environmental Management Representative, and the NCCOS Environmental Management Representative with planned actions to address any “Non-Conformities” and “Opportunities for Improvement.” The NCCOS Environmental Management Representative, and any other EMS staff whose expertise is identified as appropriate, will assist as needed. The NCCOS and NOS Environmental Management Representatives will schedule the Management Review, as described in NOAA EMS Standard 015.

- **Step 6 – Management Response:** Within 30 days after receipt of the planned actions to address any “Non-Conformities” and “Opportunities for Improvement” the Director NCCOS will finalize and sign the Management Response to the EMS Audit confirming and/or modifying the proposed actions. The Management Response, signed by the Director, will be delivered to the NCCOS EMS Coordinator.
- **Step 7 – Archiving and Tracking of Follow-up Action:** The NCCOS EMS Website will be used to archive and track follow-up actions on all NCCOS EMS Audits.