



# Environmental assurance procedure

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Version 1

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## **More information**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This *Environmental assurance procedure* outlines how to implement NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) environmental assurance activities, focusing on the practical steps to identify, plan, conduct and report site-based environmental audits. It describes the actions and considerations taken to identify projects and contracts that require targeted audits, as well as the process to communicate audit approaches, including outcomes, to individuals and groups responsible for addressing actions and opportunities.

The purpose of the procedure is to identify potential environmental hazards, manage environmental risks, monitor emerging trends, measure progress, monitor environmental performance, assess compliance with NZTA environmental requirements, and drive continuous improvement in environmental management. This procedure has been adapted from, and designed to, work in conjunction with NZTA's Safety and Risk Assurance Framework.

## 1.2 Objectives

The objective of this procedure is to establish and maintain a process for environmental assurance and verification across projects and contract works. This includes:

- establishing confidence through evidence that environmental risks have been evaluated, and that statutory obligations and NZTA requirements are being met
- assessing the effectiveness, implementation and continued suitability of Suppliers' management systems/plans in minimising risk and impact on the environment
- supporting the measurement of contract performance
- assessing how project and contract teams manage risk, deliver environmental obligations and achieve best practicable outcomes for the environment
- supporting the implementation of client-led environmental assurance reviews as outlined in Q6 Standard for Supplier Quality Audits
- drive continual improvement of national environmental management performance.

## 1.3 Scope

This procedure applies to all environmental audits conducted by NZTA and will primarily cover the following scope:

- Contractual and assurance requirements:
  - NZTA quality management requirements included in contract documentation
  - how Suppliers meet NZTA environmental and sustainability requirements, including Z19 Taumata Taiao – Environment and Sustainability Standard, environmental specifications, and environmental management plan (EMP) guidelines
  - how effectively Suppliers are performing against contract documents, for example minimum requirements, and tender documentation.
- Supplier environmental performance:
  - how effectively Suppliers' EMPs, systems and procedures, and associated sub-plans identify and manage environmental aspects and associated risks and implement processes and controls onsite
  - how effectively Suppliers are meeting statutory and regulatory requirements (including consent compliance).

The procedure may also take account of the following ISO documents:

- AS/NZS ISO 14001 *Environmental management systems – requirements with guidance for use*
- AS/NZS ISO 9001:2016 *Quality management systems – requirements*

- AS/NZS ISO 19011:2019 *Guidelines for auditing management systems*.

## 1.4 Definition of terms

The following terms are relevant to this procedure.

*Table 1: Definition of terms*

Terms	Definition
Action	Actions required to be taken as part of executing an operational activity identified through monitoring activities. These are not 'corrective actions' in relation to 'non-conformances'.
Audit	A systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the assessment criteria are fulfilled.
Centralised audit system	Software that performs functions to allow NZTA to successfully implement the environmental assurance procedure. The software holds a record of audit findings and allows for the tracking of corrective actions raised.
Corrective action	Action to eliminate the cause(s) of a potential non-conformance or other undesirable situation to prevent occurrence.
Evidence	Facts, records or information that verifies something to be true or valid. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, statements, photographs, video, plans, controlled and documented information, eg emails.
Good practice	A set of actions, procedures or behaviours that are recognised as effective, efficient and beneficial in promoting and maintaining environmental performance. These practices represent a proactive approach to managing and improving environmental outcomes.
Non-conformance	Non-fulfilment of a requirement, need or expectation that is stated in a standard, specification, guidance, procedure, contract or statutory document. Includes breach of consent/designation conditions.
Principal	Has the same meaning as Client or Principal as named in the Conditions of Contract.
Recommendation	An area within a project, contract or system where enhancements can be made to improve environmental management practice. These opportunities typically arise from identifying gaps, inefficiencies, or potential risks in existing project or contract practices.
Supplier	Has the same meaning as Consultant or Contractor as named in the Conditions of Contract.

## 1.5 Roles and responsibilities

Table 2 details the scope of each role and the associated responsibilities that are relevant to the audit. This may be an individual person, although some are the responsibility of a team.

*Table 2: Roles and responsibilities*

Role	Description
Principal	<p>Support the effective implementation of this procedure through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• collaborating to organise dates for site visits</li><li>• attending opening and closing meetings</li><li>• ensuring access to evidence required for audits</li><li>• discussing findings</li><li>• ensuring any identified corrective actions are closed out within specified timeframes.</li><li>• inputting and updating a centralised audit system with data collected from audits</li><li>• analysis and reporting.</li></ul>
Environmental Auditor	<p>The Auditor may be an NZTA employee or an external party, so long as they are independent of the contract or project team carrying out the work. They are responsible for issuing the audit plan (refer to Appendix A) and carrying out the assigned audit (refer to sections 2.2–2.3) as set out in this procedure, and shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be professional, fair, impartial and non-judgmental</li><li>• undertake evidence-based observations and reporting</li><li>• meet competency requirements (section 5) and seek specialist advice when assessing subject matter outside their area of expertise – an area in which they don't have the requisite knowledge and experience.</li></ul>
Supplier	<p>Responsible for assisting assurance activities. The Supplier shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be professional, fair, impartial and non-judgmental</li><li>• supply all required information to the Auditor as specified in the audit plan to ensure an efficient audit</li><li>• be available, participate, be open and transparent</li><li>• once findings are received, take responsibility to action and then ensure the close out of corrective actions identified from the audit.</li></ul>

## 2 Environmental assurance procedure

The procedure involves project selection, auditing, reporting and close-out phases.

### 2.1 Phase 1 – project selection

Projects/contracts will be selected based on an internal risk assessment conducted by the Principal, using a prioritisation tool that contains environmental considerations. Results from regular supplier engagements may also be used to assist project/contract selection.

### 2.2 Phase 2 – audit

Following the prioritisation and selection of projects and contracts an Environmental Auditor (Auditor) that meets the competencies set out in section 5 is appointed by the Principal to conduct the audit. The Auditor meets with the Principal to plan and discuss proposed audit dates (with a minimum of 1 month lead time).

Following the planning meeting the Auditor prepares and issues an environmental audit plan (Appendix A) to the Principal at least 2 weeks before the audit. The audit plan will detail any information required prior to the audit being undertaken.

The duration of audits is scaled according to the complexity and risk of the project/contract (Refer to section 2.1 – Project selection). The Auditor carries out the audit using the environmental checklist located in the Principal's centralised audit system, tailored to the specific project.

The audit includes a combination of office and/or site-based checks of EMP compliance (or specific technical areas of an EMP/sub-plans) with NZTA environmental standards, for example *Guideline for preparing an environmental management plan*, and statutory requirements (such as resource consent, designation, consent, outline plan of works, permitted activities, archaeological authority and wildlife authority permit). EMP implementation (or aspects of EMP implementation) will also be confirmed, including evidence that commitments are being undertaken as specified in the EMP and/or sub-plans. This might also include identifying additional environmental risks and mitigation measures that are missing from the EMP.

The scope of the audit will include checking if the Supplier has access to CS-VUE (the Principal's consent compliance system), that all relevant consents have been uploaded by the Principal, and that the Supplier is actively managing CS-VUE. It is generally not within the scope of the assessment to undertake a thorough consent condition compliance check within CS-VUE. The Supplier is responsible for providing evidence of compliance through reporting inspection data.

### 2.3 Phase 3 – findings and corrective actions

Upon completion of the audit (phase 2), findings are documented in the centralised audit system. A comprehensive environmental audit report summarising key findings (Appendix B) will be issued to the Principal and the Supplier's environmental management team. There are 3 categories of key findings relevant to the audit:

- **Good practice(s)** covering examples of effective environmental management measures or innovative approaches observed during the audit.
- **Non-conformances** requiring action and tracking upon completion.
- **Recommendations** for enhancing environmental management practices that do not require immediate remediation action. Recommendations encourage continuous improvement at a pace that is appropriate for the project or contract instead of imposing immediate or rigid mandates. Recommendations are non-binding but will be recorded in the centralised audit system. The Supplier is expected to review the recommendations and provide documented evidence of their decisions during the next follow-up site audit.

The Auditor briefs auditees on findings made during the audit. Corrective actions and reasonable timeframes for the close out of corrective actions are agreed at the closing meeting. More complex

findings and corrective actions may require further work and, if agreed by the Auditor, can be confirmed after the audit, prior to the report being issued. Findings are documented in the centralised audit system and in the environmental audit report.

In some instances, the Auditor may immediately notify the Principal of findings when they are deemed to expose NZTA to significant risk and require immediate action to mitigate. In addition, site visits undertaken as part of the audit may raise findings that need to be reported by the Supplier as an incident (as per the Supplier's incident procedure). As per the NZTA P41 *Specification for environmental incident notification, investigation and reporting*, incidents that are in breach of permit, consents and/or district or regional plan rules (as well as any other statutory breaches, for example of the Wildlife Act 1953 or Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga Act 2014), shall be reported by the Supplier to the Principal within 24 hours.

Corrective actions for non-conformances are raised in the centralised audit system and assigned to the Principal, who will track, monitor and compile evidence of implementation by the responsible Supplier. The Principal will close out the actions in the centralised audit system once evidence of completion has been received.

All audit findings, including non-conformances and corrective actions, will be kept confidential between the Supplier, Principal and the Auditor, subject to any obligations under the Official Information Act 1982.

## 2.4 Review and analyse results

Audit results shall be reviewed and analysed regularly to support continuous improvement. This includes the identification of root causes of non-conformances and trends requiring attention.

## 3 Record keeping

The centralised audit system is used when conducting and documenting environmental audits. The system allows the Principal to manage and share audit information with relevant parties.

All evidence collected during an audit, including the completed checklist, corrective actions, and the final environmental audit report, is uploaded onto the centralised audit system.

## 4 On-request audit and investigation

NZTA business groups and teams can request an additional audit or investigation to address specific concerns or emerging risks related to their projects or contracts. The request can be initiated to gain deeper insights into potential environmental issues, validate the effectiveness of existing controls or investigate incidents that may require further analysis.

Such request must be sent to [environment@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:environment@nzta.govt.nz) with a minimum of 1 month lead time to allow for effective planning. The requesting business group or team may be required to cover additional costs, such as travel expenses, if the audit team needs to conduct a site-based audit or investigation.

The requested assessment will be conducted in alignment with this *Environmental assurance procedure*, ensuring it is thorough, objective and actionable. This proactive approach supports a culture of continuous improvement.

## 5 Competency of the Auditor

The Environmental Auditor must meet the requirements of a suitably qualified professional (SQP), which means a person who has all of the following qualifications and experience:

- a relevant tertiary degree or equivalent
- at least 8 years of relevant experience
- membership or preferably chartered/certified status with a relevant professional body that includes a requirement to provide evidence of continuing professional development
- experience with at least 3 projects, plans and/or activities of a similar nature, scale and complexity.

For sub-plan audits, SQPs with qualifications and experience relating to the specific technical discipline are acceptable, for example historic heritage, ecology, or noise.

Auditors must be independent of the supplier carrying out the work. That is, they must not have a conflict of interest or be under undue pressures. In some circumstances, exemptions to SQPs may be permitted, but this must be agreed prior to the audit taking place. An audit may be led and overseen by the SQP Environmental Auditor but conducted or carried out by supervised members of their team.

Where required, the auditor will complete additional training, including site induction to conduct site audits.

## 6 Relevant procedures and guidelines

- Safety and Risk Assurance Framework
- [P41 Specification for environmental incident notification, investigation and reporting](#)
- [Guideline for preparing an environmental management plan](#)
- [Q6 Standard for Supplier Quality Audits](#)

# Appendix A: Environmental audit plan template

## Environmental audit plan for the [contract or project site] (initiative number)

### 1. Overview

This audit is part of the NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) environmental assurance programme for [year]. Through our environmental prioritisation process, your [Contract or project] has been nominated for an audit. Thank you for your involvement in helping us to learn and improve our environmental performance and effectively manage risk across the transport and construction sector.

Audit number	[audit checklist number]	Audit date(s)	[DD/MM/YYYY]
Environmental Auditor	[Name, Surname]	Other auditors	[Name, Surname]
Location(s)		NZTA project manager/contract administrator	[Name, Surname]
		Project/contract environmental manager	[Name, Surname]

### 2. Objective

The objective of this audit is to [Insert what is to be accomplished by the audit, eg determination of the extent of conformity of activities, processes and products with the requirements and procedures of the management system; or identification of areas for potential improvement of the management system.].

### 3. Scope

This audit will include activities, commitments, risks and obligations of NZTA as the client for the planning, design and work to deliver the [contract or project name] (initiative number).

The audit will cover the following areas:

- [NZTA requirements, including NZTA Environmental and Sustainability operation requirements (eg Z19 Environment and Sustainability Standard, specifications and EMP guidelines)]
- [statutory and regulatory requirements]
- [contract documents (eg minimum requirements, tender documentation)]
- [review of environmental management, including planning, resources, risk management, environmental incident management systems, stakeholder management systems and other systems]
- [reviewing the environmental risk activities on site and effectiveness of expected controls]
- [environmental work practices in the field].

The audit will include:

- [a review of documentation and records related to environmental management (eg permits, EMP and associated sub-plans, consents).] Certain documents will be requested by the lead auditor in advance to support the assessment
- [in the field assessment of work practices and site conditions]
- [joining a council inspection (as an observer, any observations would be discussed after the inspection is completed)]
- [discussions with project team and workers (as defined in the plan below)].

#### 4. Plan

Based on our discussion on [DD/MM], the following is a preliminary plan, subject to change as the audit progresses. Please contact the audit team if you require any additional information.

Stage	Topic	Contact	Location	Date	Time
Preparation	Document request	[Name, Surname]	N/A	[DD/MM]	[HH:MM]
Audit	Site induction				
Audit	Opening meeting				
Audit	Document review				
Audit	Meeting operational staff (senior manager, environment and sustainability manager, quality manager and stakeholder manager)				
Audit	Infield assessment (Including meeting with site supervisors)				
Audit	Closing meeting				

# Appendix B: Environmental audit report template

## Environmental site audit report for the [contract or project site] (initiative number)

### 1. Overview

The audit report for [project or contract name] was issued on [DD/MM/YY] as part of the NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) environmental assurance programme. It includes good practices, identified non-conformances and recommendations, and agreed corrective actions that were communicated to the [project or contract name] during the closing meeting on [DD/MM/YY]. The participants of the closing meeting were:

Participants of the [project or contract] team	NZTA Environment and Sustainability team/Auditor on NZTA's behalf
[Name, Surname, Position]	[Name, Surname, Position]
[Name, Surname, Position]	[Name, Surname, Position]

The recommendations resulting from our audit were discussed with the responsible individuals during the closing meeting. Actions agreed upon to address identified non-conformances will be documented and tracked in the centralised audit system.

### 2. Summary of the audit scope and approach

NZTA conducted an audit at the [project or contract name] on [DD/MM/YY]. The audit encompassed the following scope:

- [Insert statement from the site assurance assessment plan and notification form].

The audit comprised a review and sampling of:

- [insert audit criteria, set of policies, procedures or requirements used as a reference against which audit evidence is compared]
- [eg documentation and records related to environmental management (eg permits to work, EMP and associated sub-plans, consents)]
- [eg infield assessment of work practices and site condition]
- [eg discussion with project team and workers].

The [map] below provides a summary of the field assessment carried out on [DD/MM/YY] as well as the individuals involved in the interview process:

[information]

We would like to thank the following individuals who were interviewed during the document review and field assessment:

- [Name, Surname], [Position], from [Company]
- [eg John Doe, HS&W Manager from NZTA]

### 3. Key audit findings

A comprehensive audit report, including comments, documents and evidence gathered and reviewed during the site audit, can be found in the centralised audit system ID [number].

### 3.1 Good practice

The following good practices were identified during the inspection on [DD/MM/YY]:

- [good practice]
- [good practice]

### 3.2 Non-conformances

Non-conformances are a non-fulfilment of a requirement, need or expectation that is stated in a standard, specification, guidance, procedure, contract or statutory document.

ID	Non-conformance description	Corrective action	Person responsible	Due date
[Number]	[Summary]	[Summary]	[Name, Surname]	[DD/MM]

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### 3.3 Recommendations

Recommendations are areas for improvement, that haven't yet risen to the level of a non-conformance but have the potential to if not rectified. These recommendations are intended to encourage enhancements in various areas, allowing for implementation that is not necessarily immediate. Recommendations are non-binding but will be recorded in the centralised audit system.

The following recommendations are identified based on the review of documents and observed field practices. The [project or contract] team is expected to review the recommendations below and provide documented evidence of their decisions during the next follow up site audit.

No.	Topic	Current practice	Recommendation
[Number]	[Summary]	[Summary]	[Summary]

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### Appendix 1: Site visit photos

[Add relevant photos]