



How facility inspections  
help manufacturers

By Glen Kosowski

# Inspection Benefits

*Everyone in the drinking water industry knows that in order for a certification to hold any weight in the U.S., it must be ANSI-accredited. When a certification agency invests the extra time, effort and money to obtain an ANSI accreditation, it provides assurance to manufacturers, consumers and regulators that the certification agency runs its operation according to a very specific set of guidelines. Not only does this accreditation help manufacturers by providing a third-party verification of the program, but it also facilitates the requirement that manufacturers must undergo facility inspections.*

So you may be thinking that facility inspections are your worst nightmare—that having an auditor come into your facility to intentionally try and find something wrong with the processes and procedures your business is built on cannot possibly have any sort of positive aura around it. But if you take a step back to really understand what takes place during a facility inspection, the rewards of the Water Quality Association's (WQA) auditing program are enormous.

## Industry Knowledge & Validation

There is nothing better than an on-staff auditing department, and that is exactly what the WQA has. The facility inspectors are trained in the drinking water industry and do not freelance or subcontract their services for other industries that require audits.

How does this benefit you, the auditee? WQA auditors know the Drinking Water Treatment Unit standards and products. This knowledge allows for the reviewer to conduct time-efficient audits because large amounts of

time do not need to be spent on explaining the type of product you produce and how it works.

Further, WQA facility inspectors are knowledgeable about the WQA certification process in general. Often, while going through the audit questions about policies or procedures, the Gold Seal Certification process comes up. You will find the WQA facility inspector to be a great source of information regarding this topic. WQA auditors maintain a pool of information that a subcontracted auditor would never be able to provide.

## Self-Assessment & Continuous Improvements

Have you evaluated your processes lately? Do you have the time to really evaluate the procedures and processes your manufacturing facilities go through on a daily basis? Most employees and managers of a manufacturing facility are very involved in the day-to-day tasks of the company and do not have the time or resources to review systems for effectiveness and efficiencies.

The WQA's review of a company is

conducted with a facility employee in tow, and it is an ideal time for employees and managers to be involved in an internal review of the operating procedures taking place at the facility. During the audit, management can evaluate its strengths and weaknesses from an unbiased point of view. This allows the company to improve its procedures and processes while trying to achieve the ultimate goal of making a superior product. By being involved in the audit, managers have the ability to internally reflect on the manufacturing processes and promote continuous improvements to the company.

### Efficient & Economical

An audit inherently raises a sense of fear in employees. This fear can be motivating and create a sense of urgency that can be used in a positive way. After the inspection, adjustments will generally be required regarding manufacturing processes or daily activities. Commonly, you will have discovered areas for improve-

ment that will save money and time. Because these areas of improvement and suggestions for change have come from the ever-feared auditor, pushing these changes through is typically much easier and completed much more quickly than if the changes were brought up by an existing employee.

When the changes prove to provide savings, the savings can be distributed any number of ways. You may now have the option to improve equipment or become more efficient in an area of manufacturing that may save even more money in the long run. In addition, cost savings may be realized when small problems are discovered early—before they become large and expensive problems. If addressed properly and in a positive light, facility inspections can lead to cost savings in your processes and provide an efficient means to getting things done.

### Uniformity Across the Industry

Welcoming a WQA facility inspector

into your plant provides a level playing field for all industry manufacturers who participate in such inspections. Every WQA audit follows the same inspection procedures, which are regulated by international standards. The audits not only improve production processes but also verify that participating manufacturers adhere to the same standard of quality. Furthermore, audits elevate the industry's overall reputation. The consistency of ensuring good manufacturing creates good will for the consumer among all WQA Gold Seal-certified products.

At first thought, it may seem that the process of being audited is not only unbeneficial but also time-consuming, costly and cumbersome. However, when the audit is complete, you will find that the WQA facility inspector has left you with a sense of accomplishment and a renewed view of improvement ideas, which typically lay dormant in the midst of daily activities. WQA auditors provide answers and offer improvement ideas

that often save time and money; but most of all, they point out key areas in which your facility is excelling. *wqp*

*For more information about the WQA's Gold Seal Program and annual inspections and certifications, contact the WQA Gold Seal Certification Department at 630.505.0160.*

### About the Author

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