

Author: P. Scott	Social Accountability Accreditation Services	Issue: 1
Approval: J. Brookes	SAAS Notification 2020:4: Coronavirus Temporary Instruction	Effective: March 16, 2020



Social Accountability Accreditation Services (SAAS)  
A division of Social Accountability International (SAI)

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## SAAS Notification

Issue: 4

Date: Monday March 16, 2020

To: All SAAS Accredited Certification Bodies (CBs)

From: John Brookes, Executive Director, SAAS, New York

RE: COVID-19 Temporary Instruction

***This Notification (Issue 4) supersedes and replaces our earlier notifications of January 30, 2020 (Issue 1), February 25 (Issue 2) and March 13 (Issue 3).***

### 1) General

In light of the current Coronavirus pandemic, this Temporary Instruction applies to the maintenance of all SA8000 Applicant and Certified Clients globally.

The instructions outlined in this Notification temporarily override the requirements defined in SAAS Procedure 200 clause 16.1.6b) for SA8000 certifications globally.

From time to time, extraordinary events may occur that are beyond the control of a Certification Body (CB) or Accreditation Body (SAAS), such as the current global coronavirus emergency. During these events, SAAS and SAAS-Accredited CBs have a joint responsibility to uphold the credibility of accredited SA8000 certifications by demonstrating appropriate due diligence and reasonable actions to mitigate program risks. In doing so, however, SAAS and CBs must recognize human risks and respect the rights of individuals who may potentially be impacted by the event.

To this end, we wish to advise the following:

### 2) Actions By SAAS

a) SAAS personnel are not conducting on-site accreditation oversight activities globally until such time as this Temporary Instruction is modified or rescinded.

***Note: Presently, we hope to gradually resume on-site accreditation activities in selected locations after May 1 and are tentatively reserving dates for such activities. No travel arrangements or visit confirmations will occur until permitted under this Temporary Instruction.***

b) In the next week or two, SAAS (Head Office and Client Managers) will contact CBs individually regarding their programs to maintain certifications in locations impacted by COVID-19 travel restrictions.

c) SAAS will review this Temporary Instruction at least every 2 weeks, but may extend or rescind it at any time (as the current coronavirus situation develops).

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### 3) **Actions BY SAAS-Accredited CBs Globally (All Countries)**

- a) Until this Temporary Instruction is amended or rescinded, SAAS strongly recommends that SAAS-accredited CBs discontinue on-site SA8000 Initial Certification, Surveillance Recertification and Transfer Audits in all countries globally.

*Note: We are greatly encouraged by recently reported improvements to the COVID-19 situation and associated risks posed to auditors in China. We understand that many certification bodies (CBs) are in the process of resuming on-site audit visits there, however, this is not a mandatory SAAS requirement at this time. Similarly, we note that some CBs continue audits in geographical locations they consider to be low risk for COVID-19 infection. While SAAS is not in a position to prevent CBs conducting audits, we urge extreme caution and due respect for the rights and concerns of auditors and client company staff.*

- b) In lieu of on-site visits, during the period that this temporary instruction remains in force, current SA8000 certifications for client organizations impacted under 3a) may alternatively be maintained as follows:

1. On-Site Audit Alternative Temporary Measure: From the date of this Temporary Instruction (and when the next on-site visit for each SA8000 certification client becomes due), each CB SHALL perform and document an off-site 'Follow-up Review' as defined in SAAS Procedure 200. This 'Follow-up Review' SHALL be repeated every 8 weeks during the life of this Temporary Instruction. Where appropriate, the CB auditor SHALL raise and review non-conformities in the normal follow-up manner. Any non-conformity finding demanding auditor review of on-site evidence prior to closure SHALL remain open until a satisfactory review can take place during a future site visit. If a client organization business closes, making 'Follow-up Review' impossible, this shall be recorded and followed-up periodically. If client organization's business remains closed eight weeks after an audit visit was due, the CB shall suspend the client's SA8000 certificate until such time as monitoring has been successfully resumed and satisfactory SA8000 performance demonstrated.
2. Recertification Alternative Temporary Measure: Unless otherwise amended by SAAS through a future Temporary Instruction, a full recertification decision may be deferred for a maximum period of six months from the due date. In the interim period (until such time as a recertification on-site audit is feasible and audit conclusions available) the CB SHALL issue an 'Temporary' SA8000 certificate. Such certificates SHALL be numbered and include a temporary suffix of "T" (to indicate an 'Temporary' certificate - e.g. Certificate # H4532T)
3. CB Management Oversight Temporary Measure: A report on the credibility of each of the CB's SA8000 Certifications maintained under 3a) above SHALL be produced every 8 weeks. This report SHALL also include a review of the impact of the coronavirus on the CB, its Certified Clients, and their business. Reports SHALL be provided to authorized SAAS personnel upon request.

- c) Potentially conflicting expectations: CBs are advised to also follow recommendations that may be issued by national and other applicable accreditation bodies, and by government authorities. Should a conflict with this instruction arise, please notify SAAS immediately.

### 4) **Eliminated in this Version**

### 5) **Future Actions when this Temporary Instruction is Rescinded**

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When this Temporary Instruction is rescinded, SAAS will issue a further instruction regarding our continuing accreditation oversight program and the actions required of CBs to bring certification clients back in line with Procedure 200 and other requirements.

Sincerely,  
John Brookes  
Executive Director  
SAAS