

Why become an accredited inspection body?



global trust
Testing – Calibration – Inspection

What is accreditation?

Inspection accreditation is a means of determining the technical competence, independence and impartiality of organisations that carry out specific inspection activities.

The Inspection services provided by your organisation are an essential part of ensuring the operational safety of many items that the public use in their daily lives.

Your services involve the examination of a design, product, service, process or installation; and determining their conformity with specific requirements. Many types of inspection also involve professional judgement for conformance against standards and general requirements.

To become accredited, your organisation must demonstrate, to an accreditation body, that you have the necessary competence to perform the specified tasks.



What types of inspection bodies can seek accreditation?

Examples of activities which benefit from accreditation include inspection of pressure equipment, cranes and passenger ropeways, inspection of offshore structures for oil and gas exploration and production, mechanical equipment inspection, non-destructive testing, inspection of meat, dairy products and other food production, bio-security and border control inspections, to name a few.

Inspection body accreditation is a formal means of demonstrating the technical competence of your inspection body to perform specific types of inspections, thereby providing a ready means for your customers to gain confidence in the quality of inspection services they will receive.

If you are considering seeking accreditation for your inspection organisation, the first thing you will need to do is contact the appropriate accreditation body to see whether they can accredit your range of inspection services.

Most national accreditation bodies can provide comprehensive accreditation for:

- facilities undertaking any sort of inspection;
- private or government inspection bodies;
- remote field operations and temporary inspection operations;
- small/micro operations or large multi-disciplinary organisations.



How do you become accredited?

Your organisation can have either all or part of its inspection activities accredited. The assessment process involves the use of technical specialists who assess the specific types of inspection being performed. The assessment criteria are based on the international standard ISO/IEC 17020: *Conformity assessment – requirements for the various types of bodies performing inspection*, which is used for assessing inspection bodies throughout the world and involves a thorough assessment of all the elements of an inspection body that contribute to the production of accurate and reliable inspection reports, including consideration of the following:

- technical competence of staff (including qualifications, training and experience)
- appropriateness of inspection methods
- the use of suitable equipment (properly calibrated and maintained)
- safeguards to ensure impartiality and confidentiality
- code of conduct and processes for working safely
- effective quality assurance procedures

Inspection body accreditation uses criteria and procedures specifically developed to determine technical competence. Specialist technical assessors conduct a thorough evaluation of all factors in an inspection body's operation that affect the production of reliable inspection results.

At the end of the assessment by an accreditation body, a detailed report is presented to the inspection body, highlighting any areas that require attention and corrective action before the inspection body can be recommended for accreditation.

Once accredited, the inspection body is regularly re-assessed to ensure its continued compliance with requirements, and to check that its standard of operation is being maintained.

All these factors contribute to an inspection body being formally recognised as technically competent to undertake specific inspection activities.

What are the benefits of becoming accredited?

- Accreditation bodies around the world, which have been evaluated by peers as competent, have signed an arrangement that enhances the acceptance of products and services across national borders. The purpose of this arrangement, the ILAC Inspection Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA), is to create an international framework to support international trade through the removal of technical barriers. The MRA acts as an internationally recognised 'stamp of approval' to demonstrate compliance against agreed standards and requirements and to allow accredited inspection reports to be more readily accepted in overseas markets. This recognition helps to reduce costs for manufacturers and exporters that have their products or materials inspected by accredited inspection bodies, by reducing or eliminating the need for re-inspecting in another economy.
- Accreditation benefits inspection bodies by allowing them to determine whether they are performing their work correctly and to appropriate standards, and provides them with a benchmark for maintaining that competence. Many inspection bodies operate in isolation from their peers, and rarely, if ever, receive any independent technical evaluation as a measure of their performance.
- Accreditation is an effective marketing tool for inspection organizations, and a passport to submit tenders to clients that require independently verified technical competence and consistently reliable inspection reports.
- Accreditation is highly regarded both nationally and internationally as a reliable indicator of technical competence. Many industries and regulations specify accreditation for suppliers of inspection services.
- Accreditation uses criteria and procedures specifically developed to determine technical competence, thus assuring customers that the inspection reports supplied by the inspection service are accurate, reliable and impartial.
- Many accreditation bodies also publish a directory of their accredited inspection bodies, which includes contact details plus information on their inspection capabilities. This is another means of promoting an inspection body's accredited services to potential clients.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on inspection body accreditation, you will need to contact your ILAC recognised accreditation body. To find out if your economy has one or more inspection accreditation bodies, visit the website of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) at www.ilac.org and use the directory of accreditation bodies available on this website.

More information about ILAC

ILAC is the peak international authority on laboratory and inspection accreditation, with a membership consisting of accreditation bodies and stakeholder organisations throughout the world. Its internet site at www.ilac.org can provide a range of information on laboratory and inspection accreditation, as well as the location of its members world-wide.

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