

Infrastructure self-audit checklist

Environmental Compliance

Is your Environmental Authority current, valid with the right business name listed?

Your EA or environmental “licence” is a critical document and not one for the bottom drawer. Should an environmental incident occur it will look bad for your business if it is not an up-to-date document that your business is clearly referring to and adhering to.

Are you and your Operators/Maintainers aware of all the reporting requirements of the EA?

Keeping water and sewerage assets operational and available day in day out can be challenging in itself. Ensuring your Operators have clear and accessible EA information is a great way of ensuring the environmental obligations do not get missed. This can be as simple as keeping a laminated A4 Plant Information Sheet in a convenient and accessible location that clearly outlines sampling frequency and quality obligations (water, land, air, etc.).

Are you compliant with requirements of your EA?

This includes disposal area requirements and effluent discharge requirements listed, such as final effluent (treated wastewater) BOD, TSS, TN, TP and/or free chlorine. You may also be obliged to show records of regular and accurate instrument calibration so having good management systems that ensure this will save potential issues if there is an incident onsite.

Is the start of the busy period likely to result in a disruption that might threaten compliance?

For instance, does your STP have a “winter feeding program” that will need to transition to a regular operational program, or does your STP need to be

“fed” or “built-up” prior to the busy season to handle the higher loads the plant will experience?

Are all your disposal systems functioning correctly?

Is there evidence of issues or damage to the disposal areas or infrastructure (e.g. ponding or plant damage, ruptured pipework, leaks, etc.)? Is there routine sampling required that needs to be conducted? An audit of the disposal areas should ideally be conducted when irrigation/disposal is taking place or has just recently finished, but ensure that this is conducted safely, i.e. do not expose you or your staff to unnecessary risks, but do look for evidence of:

- Ponding of irrigated effluent;
- Exposed, kinked or damaged dripper or irrigation spray lines;
- Excessive erosion or evidence of previous erosion; or
- Evidence of possible environmental issues e.g. excessive algae in stormwater retention ponds or downstream environmental receptors (creeks and streams).

Have you reviewed your internal reporting requirements and are these adequate for reporting purposes?

Maintaining good records is not just critical to reporting to regulators annually, but also allows you to track and identify issues that are likely to become “an emergency” if not planned for. While you have the time make a point of reviewing your previous annual returns and look for feedback on what could be done better. Update your daily operational log sheets and other key internal reporting mechanisms to make future annual returns more comprehensive but easier to complete.