

Certification and Audit Readiness, Done Properly

The Operational Hygiene Index prepares you for the audit that actually counts, whether that is a certification body, a customer, or your insurance. And when a previous hygiene assessment fell short, it gives you the structure to make the next one far more thorough.

The Scenario

A certification audit, a customer audit, or another external review of your operational hygiene is coming up. You want the facility to walk in prepared, not to find out where the gaps are during the audit itself.

This use case covers that situation, and one more. Sometimes the trigger is not a coming audit, but a previous one that only went so far: a hygiene assessment done for free by a biocide or preservative supplier, useful for spotting contamination, but never designed to trace it back to a cause or propose a fix, followed later by the same problem showing up again.

Why “Audit-Ready” Is Different From “Compliant”

Passing a certification audit and actually having low operational hygiene risk are not automatically the same thing. A checklist-based assessment can confirm the paperwork is in order without ever asking whether the underlying process is genuinely low-risk.

A risk-based audit does the opposite. It looks at where product sits still, where it moves, and where responsibility for hygiene is unclear, the same questions a thorough external auditor would ask. Preparing with the OHI means walking into the actual audit having already answered those questions, not hoping they do not come up.

Two Ways Into This Use Case

- 1. Preparing for an upcoming audit.** — certification bodies, customers, and insurers all apply their own audit standards. The OHI builds a Process Landscape and Roadmap ahead of time, so gaps are closed before an external auditor finds them, not after.
- 2. Building on an audit that only went so far.** — a common case: a biocide or preservative supplier runs a free hygiene audit. These are often competently done and useful for periodic benchmarking, but built to spot contamination, not to trace it back to a cause or propose a fix. If contamination keeps recurring, that gap is usually why. The OHI does not need to replace that assessment. It builds the structure underneath it, going further into root cause and solutions than it was ever designed to.

Why a Free Supplier Audit Only Goes So Far

A free audit from a biocide or preservative supplier is often carried out by competent people, and genuinely useful as a periodic check on where things stand. What it is not built to do is go further: trace a contamination back to its root cause, or propose the changes that would prevent it happening again.

That is not a question of competence. It is a question of interest. Their business depends on selling more preservative, not on reducing your reliance on it. Recommending the process, equipment, or organizational changes that would actually address the root cause works against their own business model, so there is little reason for them to go there. An independent, risk-based audit has no such conflict. It looks at the full picture, technical, organizational, and process-related, and follows the problem all the way to its cause and its fix.

The Insurance Angle

Contamination incidents are also an insurance matter. When a claim is filed, insurers respond well to evidence of ongoing, structured risk management, not just a one-time fix after the fact.

A recurring OHI engagement provides exactly that. The index score creates a documented, comparable record of operational hygiene over time, built from assessments run once or twice a year rather than a single audit. That record shows an insurer, a customer, or your own management, a company that is actively managing the risk, not one that only responds after an incident. An independent operational hygiene consultant, with recurring, numbers-based assessments behind them, is something a company can point to directly when a claim needs to be substantiated.

How the Engagement Works

A Certification and Audit Readiness engagement runs the full, standard OHI structure.

Phase 1 — Standard Kick-off

A structured walkthrough of the facility, the certification or audit standard you are preparing for, and, where relevant, the findings and gaps in a previous hygiene assessment being built on.

Phase 2 — Questionnaire

A structured, risk-based assessment across the facility, built to hold up under the same scrutiny an external auditor would apply, not just to satisfy an internal checklist.

Phase 3 — On-Site Audit

An in-person, on-site audit, closing the gap between what the documentation says and what is actually happening on the plant floor.

What You Get

Process Landscape

A documented map of what happens where, and who is responsible for it. This is precisely the kind of documentation a certification body, a customer, or an insurer expects to see, and often the piece missing from a superficial prior assessment.

Roadmap

A prioritized, sequenced list of measures to close any remaining gaps before the audit that actually counts, ranked by risk rather than by convenience.

Final Report

The formal, written record of the audit findings, delivered as part of the standard two-day on-site audit. Ready to circulate to management, to a certification body, or to an insurer as documented proof of due diligence.

Further Support, If You Want It

Training for hygiene staff. — closes the gap between what the Roadmap specifies and what the team on the ground can actually execute day to day.

Periodic re-assessment. — the OHI is designed as a diagnostic to revisit once or twice a year. This is what turns a single audit into the documented track record described above, useful for certification renewals, customer reviews, and insurance documentation alike.

Both are optional. What you actually need depends on your certification timeline and what the audit finds.

Common Questions

We do not have a certification audit scheduled yet. Is this still relevant?

Yes. Being ready ahead of a scheduled audit is exactly the point. Most clients start before a date is fixed, so the Roadmap has time to be worked through, not rushed.

How does this work with a previous hygiene assessment from a supplier?

It is treated as a starting point, not a foundation. The Kick-off reviews what that assessment covered and where it fell short, then builds the Process Landscape and Roadmap properly from there. In most cases, the existing assessment is thin enough that this engagement effectively starts fresh.

Does the OHI replace the certification body's own audit?

No. It prepares you for that audit. The certification body, customer, or insurer still conducts their own review. The OHI closes the gaps beforehand, so that review goes the way you expect it to.

Can this documentation actually be used with our insurer?

Yes, as evidence of structured, ongoing risk management. It does not replace your insurer's own requirements, but a Final Report and a track record of recurring assessments is exactly the kind of documentation that supports a claim or a policy discussion.

Where to Start

Whether there is a certification audit on the calendar, or a previous hygiene assessment that did not hold up, this is the point to bring in an independent, risk-based review. The OHI gives you a Process Landscape, a Roadmap, and a Final Report you can stand behind, in front of an auditor, a customer, or an insurer.

Book a call to discuss your situation and how the OHI fits into your timeline: zeeg.me/grosseronald.

