

# Rethinking Operational Hygiene in an Existing Facility

The Operational Hygiene Index applies to an existing facility in two ways: shaping a retrofit while it can still be influenced, or assessing a facility that has been running for years to see where it stands, and whether a retrofit is even needed.

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## The Scenario

You are working with an existing facility. The building, the tanks, and the piping are already there. This is different from a Greenfield project, where nothing exists yet, and that case is covered separately.

There are two situations this covers. Either a retrofit is being planned, often triggered by changing regulatory requirements around preservatives or by the market asking for lower-preservative products. Or nothing is currently planned at all, and the facility has simply been running as it is, sometimes for years, with nobody having taken an independent, structured look at its operational hygiene.

## Why Acting Early Matters

The consequence of waiting is straightforward. Left unaddressed, operational hygiene gaps eventually surface as contamination, and contamination brings complaints, rework, and disrupted production. In some cases it goes further: without the right measures in place, certain products may not be safe, or even possible, to produce at all, especially as regulatory and market pressure on preservatives keeps tightening.

Addressing operational hygiene early, whether that means shaping a retrofit before it is locked in, or taking stock of a facility that has been quietly running as-is, is what keeps that risk a planning question instead of a crisis.

## Two Cases This Covers

This use case applies in two different situations. You may only need one of them.

**Case 1 — Planning a Retrofit.** — you already know a retrofit is coming, whether driven by regulation, by the market, or by your own decision to reduce preservative use. This is where the hygiene concept gets built and integrated directly into the retrofit plan, before the scope and budget are locked in.

**Case 2 — An Established Facility.** — no retrofit is currently planned. Your facility has been running as it is, sometimes for years, and you want an independent, structured view of where operational hygiene actually stands today, and whether a retrofit or other changes are needed at all. This is often the better

starting point: coming in only after a retrofit is already finished leaves little room to actually shape it.

The rest of this document follows both cases, side by side, so you can focus on the one that matches your situation.

## **Built on Hands-On Experience**

This is not a generic audit framework applied from the outside. Over the past several years, I have brought several production facilities, in Germany and abroad, up to a high standard of operational hygiene, working directly in both situations: shaping a retrofit while it was still on paper, and assessing facilities that had simply been running as they were for years.

## **Why This Needs an Outside View**

Your retrofit contractor can install new equipment, new lines, and new piping to specification. Making sure that specification is hygienically sound is a different job.

Few retrofit contractors or equipment suppliers have deep expertise in operational hygiene. Operational hygiene is a multidimensional topic, spread across Quality Assurance, Production Planning, and Process Engineering, and interface problems between those functions are exactly where hygiene gaps tend to form. A contractor sees the retrofit through a single lens, process engineering, and has neither the scope nor the know-how to coordinate the other two.

For an established facility, there is a second reason, and it has nothing to do with contractors: operational blindness. The people who know a facility best, having worked in it for years, are often the least likely to spot what is wrong with it. An outside view brings the objectivity that daily familiarity tends to erode.

## **How Each Engagement Works**

### **CASE 1 — PLANNING A RETROFIT**

Two phases. The facility already exists, so a physical, on-site audit is both possible and built directly into the first phase.

#### **Phase 1 — Extended Kick-off, With On-Site Audit**

An in-person, on-site audit of the areas the retrofit will touch, combined with a review of the reasons behind the retrofit and the current state of the facility. This step has to happen on site. A video call or a 3D model cannot substitute for walking the existing plant floor.

#### **Phase 2 — Questionnaire**

Tailored to the areas the retrofit will change, shaping the hygiene concept around what is being added, replaced, or reworked.

## What Case 1 Gives You

### **Concrete Technical Recommendations, Plus Process Landscape and Roadmap**

Because this input lands while the retrofit is still being planned, it goes well beyond a general map and a prioritized list. It includes concrete, technical recommendations for the process engineering itself, specific equipment and layout choices, and hygienic design details you can act on directly, while they can still shape what actually gets built. That comes together with the documented Process Landscape and the Roadmap, both built directly into the retrofit plan.

## **CASE 2 — AN ESTABLISHED FACILITY**

Three phases. This is a full, independent assessment of where operational hygiene stands today.

### **Phase 1 — Standard Kick-off**

A structured walkthrough of the facility as it stands today: layout, process flow, equipment, and the current state of operational hygiene, formally or informally.

### **Phase 2 — Questionnaire**

Tailored to your facility's areas, building a detailed, area-by-area picture of how operational hygiene actually works today.

### **Phase 3 — On-Site Audit**

An in-person audit of the facility, testing the picture built so far against what is actually happening on the plant floor.

## What Case 2 Gives You

### **A Process Landscape, Roadmap, and Final Report**

A documented Process Landscape and a prioritized Roadmap, including concrete technical recommendations for closing the gaps found, built around your facility as it actually operates today, plus a Final Report: the formal, written record of the audit findings, delivered as part of the standard two-day on-site audit and ready to circulate to management.

## Further Support, If You Want It

**Training for hygiene staff.** — hygiene staff are often a new function for companies at this stage.

Training builds the practical skills for cleaning, disinfection, and preservation directly, instead of leaving the team to learn on the job.

**Retrofit support or periodic re-assessment.** — accompaniment during the retrofit itself for Case 1, or periodic re-assessment for Case 2, since the OHI is designed as a diagnostic to revisit once or twice a year, not a single, one-off check.

Both are optional. What you actually need depends on your situation.

## Common Questions

### How do I know which case applies to us?

If a retrofit is already being planned, that is Case 1. If your facility has simply been running as-is and you want to know where it stands, that is Case 2. If you are unsure, the Kick-off conversation sorts this out in minutes.

### Do we need to pause production for either case?

No. Both cases, including the on-site work, are designed to work around a running facility.

### Can we start with Case 2 even if a retrofit might follow later?

Yes. Many engagements start there. If the assessment shows a retrofit is the right next step, Case 1 picks up from exactly what Case 2 already found, so nothing gets redone.

### What if only part of the facility is in scope?

That is the normal case for both. The Kick-off scopes the engagement to the relevant areas, whether that is the part being retrofitted in Case 1, or specific areas of concern in Case 2, not necessarily the whole site.

## Where to Start

Whether a retrofit is already on the table, or your facility has simply been running as-is for years, the earlier operational hygiene enters the conversation, the more it stays a planning question instead of an incident report. The OHI gives you a Process Landscape and a Roadmap either way, backed by hands-on experience with exactly these situations.

Book a call to discuss your situation, and which case fits: [zeeg.me/grosseronald](https://zeeg.me/grosseronald).

