

Seven Steps for a "Perfect" On-Site Assessment

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We all realize that having a perfect on-site assessment is no small accomplishment. However, there are some rather simple steps your laboratory can take to ensure that the assessment runs smoothly and relatively error-free. The staff at AASHTO re:source understands what a special event the on-site assessment is for each of our customers, and that it can be an overwhelming process. The goal of this article is to give you a few pointers on preparing for your on-site assessment. Following these steps will help you get the most out of the assessment process and ensure that it runs as smoothly as possible.

Step 1: Review the Assessment Schedule

The first step is to find out when we will be coming to your area. The [on-line schedule](#) provides an estimate for when we will be coming to your area. The schedule is subject to change, so we recommend that you check the schedule for updates on a regular basis.



Step 2: Six Months before the Assessment

If your laboratory is currently enrolled in the AASHTO re:source programs, you will be sent a letter approximately five to six months before we are scheduled to arrive in your state. This letter should prompt you to request an assessment using our online request form. While filling out the request form, you will verify the laboratory's contact information and select the specific test standards that you would like AASHTO re:source to review during the

assessment.

At this time you may also want make sure that you have a copy of the most current versions of the AASHTO and ASTM standards that will be covered during the assessment. Your laboratory will need to present the most current version of each test method performed. AASHTO standards are updated once a year in late summer or early fall. ASTM standards are updated more frequently, and ASTM International offers a free service that allows you to [receive email notifications](#) each time one of the standards that you use is updated. In addition, if your laboratory is seeking AASHTO Accreditation, you will need to obtain a copy of the current version of AASHTO R 18. A copy of AASHTO R 18 can be purchased by visiting the [AASHTO Bookstore](#).

Finally, if your laboratory is seeking AASHTO Accreditation, it is a good idea to make sure that the quality management system and calibration records are up-to-date and in compliance with AASHTO R 18. By completing this check ahead of time, you can identify any overlooked or outdated equipment calibrations, standardization, or checks that need to be completed.



Step 3: Three Months before the Assessment

We will send a second letter to any laboratories that have not already requested their assessment. This should arrive approximately three months before we are going to be in the area. If you have not already submitted your online request form by this point, it is important that you do so as soon as possible. If your laboratory is seeking AASHTO Accreditation, you can continue to prepare for the assessment by reviewing records of internal audits, training,

and equipment maintenance. By making sure all of these things are complete and current, you will be well-prepared when the AASHTO re:source assessor arrives at your lab.



Step 4: One Month before the Assessment

You will receive an announcement letter from AASHTO re:source approximately four weeks before the scheduled start date of your on-site assessment. This letter will include important information about the name of the assessor that will be arriving at your facilities, the date of the assessment, and the expected length of the visit.

At this time, we recommend that you review the [Assessment Preparation Lists](#) found on our website. These documents provide information on how to prepare for each specific test that will be reviewed during the assessment. Using these documents to prepare for your assessment can help to expedite the assessment process and ensure that it runs as smoothly as possible. You may also want to have the technicians that will demonstrate tests during the assessment review the applicable AASHTO or ASTM standards.



Step 5: One Week before the Assessment

Approximately one week before the assessment you should receive a phone call from your laboratory assessor. The assessor will use this time to introduce themselves, confirm your laboratory's start date and time, as well as answer any questions that you may have. If you haven't done so already, we highly recommend that you follow the steps listed in the Assessment Preparation Lists found on our website to begin preparing test samples that can be used for demonstration during the assessment. It can take a few days to obtain and prepare all of the materials needed for the assessment, and having samples ready to go when the assessor arrives will help to ensure that things run smoothly.

Finally, if you have had an assessment previously, it is a good idea to review the report from your previous assessment to make sure that you do not repeat any mistakes that were made last time you had a visit from AASHTO re:source.

Step 6: During the Assessment

The final step in preparing for an on-site assessment is to relax. We realize that an assessment is a big event for your laboratory. However, if you have followed the steps described above you will have nothing to worry about. The assessment should be relatively worry and error-free, and we will be in and out of your laboratory in the most efficient way possible.

Step 7: After the Assessment

After the assessment, it will be approximately four weeks until you receive your final assessment report. During this time you can start working on resolving the nonconformities that were noted on your preliminary report. If your laboratory is seeking accreditation, all of the nonconformities in your final report must be resolved within 60 days from the day the report was issued. Labs will need to respond to nonconformities using the "Accreditation Events" section of their laboratory's page on our website.

After you receive your final report, you will get an email from AASHTO re:source requesting that you submit feedback on the assessor that visited your laboratory and the program overall. AASHTO re:source uses your feedback to make important changes to our programs. We would love to hear how we are doing. You can [submit feedback](#) on the Laboratory Assessment Program.

Still Have Questions about the Laboratory Assessment Program?

Check out our website for additional information. In addition, you can always [contact us](#) with your specific questions and concerns. We realize that preparing for your assessment can seem like a daunting task. Remember that we are always available to help you along the way. Above all, we hope that your on-site assessment is a positive experience, and that it improves the quality of your laboratory's testing services.

Editor's Note: This article was updated in June 2016 to ensure the most accurate information is provided.