Questions and answers about our SA8000 certification.

Our experts address frequently asked questions about certifications under the SA8000 standard. We haven't answered your questions here? Contact us!

1. WHAT IS COVERED UNDER THE SA8000 STANDARD?

SA8000 is a social management and certification system designed to help manufacturing companies stay in compliance with minimum social and ethical standards. These norms were developed in the late nineties based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as recommendations by the International Labour Organization (ILO). As an internationally recognized certification scheme, SA8000 is comparable in structure to the ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 management norms, which contain a range of strict standards governing issues such as humane working conditions or the ban on child labor.

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2. WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR SA8000?

SA8000 certifications comprise the following criteria:
- Child labor
- Forced or compulsory labor
- Occupational health and safety
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining rights
- Discrimination
- Disciplinary practices
- Working hours
- Remuneration
- Management systems

3. WHO IS SUITED FOR THE STANDARD?

The Social Accountability 8000 management and certification system, or SA8000 for short, is suitable for any company that wants to empower its employees and their families by focusing on social responsibility. At the forefront are internationally active enterprises seeking to strengthen – and communicate – their commitment to responsible corporate governance. In addition, the certificate is well suited for product suppliers and commercial chains regardless of their size, industry or location. The certification is voluntary.

4. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN SA8000 CERTIFICATION?

- Protect yourself against public attacks on your image related to social corporate responsibility.
- Provide documentary evidence of your company's compliance with social standards and your dedication to occupational norms – show that you take social responsibility seriously!
- Cultivate trust from the public, your partners and customers by demonstrably meeting their requirements.
- Gain a distinct competitive advantage over companies that have not aligned their production with established social standards.
- Ensure social harmony at your production sites and improve relations with your suppliers.
- Use the minimum standards defined in SA8000 for general orientation and in your external communications.
- Prove that fair working conditions, occupational health and safety, and environmentally sustainable production methods are a matter of course in your company.
- Improve working conditions and provide safer production environments.

5. WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING AN SA8000 CERTIFICATION?

1. Pre-audit (optional)

   Our auditors conduct a preliminary assessment to determine which, if any, requirements for the SA8000 standard have already been implemented in your company.

2. Self-evaluation „Social Fingerprint"

   „Social Fingerprint" is an online tool for the assessment of your management system. After answering several questions you will receive an analysis of ten different aspects of your management system as well as suggestions for improvement.

3. Certification audit
   You demonstrate the application of your social standards in practice, and our auditors test the efficacy of those measures.
4. Issuing the certificate
   Your company receives a certificate once all the criteria have been met. This certifies the conformity of your social standards with the SA8000 norm. In addition, your company is registered with our online Certipedia database of certificates so that you can use our widely recognized mark to advertise your certified sustainability. Learn more about Advertising with TÜV Rheinland.
5. Surveillance audits
   Our semiannual surveillance audits support you in the continual improvement of working conditions.
6. Re-certification
   Undergoing re-certification after a period of three years sets you on a permanent path of continual improvement. It represents thorough and lasting documentation of your commitments to socially responsible business.

6. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SA8000 STANDARD?

The SA8000 standard places certain demands on an organization in terms of socially responsible governance. Certified companies are required to maintain humane working conditions, including a ban on child or forced labor. It is equally unacceptable to discriminate against employees based on their origin, gender or religion. Furthermore, organizations should pursue systemic improvements to working conditions beyond the company itself by granting all personnel basic human rights such as the right to free assembly, the right to associate in trade unions, and collective bargaining rights. SA8000 also governs issues such as living wages or an upper limit of 48 work hours per week with at least one day of rest. The certification must also be publicly documented.

No child laborers or forced labor

Banning all racial, gender-based and religious discrimination

Documentation through external certification

Freedom of assembly, the right to associate in trade unions, and collective bargaining rights

Requirements for SA8000 include:

Systematic improvements to on-site conditions

Upper limit of 48 work hours per week with at least one day of rest

Upholding humane working conditions

Guaranteed living wages

7. DOES THE STANDARD ALSO INTEGRATE WITH EXISTING QUALITY AND OCCUPATIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS?

Yes, social standard SA8000 can be fully integrated. For instance, if you want to document your corporate responsibility towards people and the environment, you may wish to combine SA8000 with certified environmental management under ISO 14001 or EMAS.

8. DOES THE STANDARD ALSO COVER SUB-CONTRACTORS?

Yes, SA8000 also covers sub-contractors such as suppliers and other third parties associated with the certified company, provided they fall under the company's purview and influence.

9. ARE SUB-CONTRACTORS ALSO AUDITED?

Companies are responsible for auditing their suppliers and sub-contractors. As such, auditors do not inspect these sub-contractors directly, but instead verify that the certified company has established effective monitoring practices.

10. WHAT ABOUT COMPANIES WITH AN EXISTING OHSAS 18001 CERTIFICATION – CAN THEY LEAVE THAT PART OUT OF THE SA8000 AUDIT?

No. Despite some overlap between OHSAS 18001 and SA8000, the affected areas cannot be omitted because auditors are required to confirm that the company meets all the criteria under SA8000.

11. ARE INTERNAL AUDITS REQUIRED?

Yes, internal audits should be conducted. Companies are required to ensure full compliance with the requirements of SA8000. These internal audits are supposed to take place at least once per year.

OUR SPECIALISTS ARE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU WITH ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS. CONTACT US TODAY!

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