



# ISAGO Support Program

## 1. Introduction

Working under the governance of the ISAGO Oversight Council (GOC) and the guidance of the Safety, Flight and Ground Operations Advisory Council (SFGOAC), and in alignment with the IATA Board's declaration of the [five principles for re-starting aviation](#), the IATA Safety Audit for Ground Operations program (ISAGO) was revised temporarily to offer a safety-focused, attainable, flexible and effective approach in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

The ISAGO Support Program is based on the following three objectives:

1	Support Ground Service Providers with pertinent & affordable audit solutions	2	Ensure minimum industry-wide safety assurance activity during the crisis	3	Contribute to reopening of air traffic by providing trustworthy audit results to Airlines and CAAs
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## 2. Extenuating Circumstances

On 25 March 2020, IATA introduced the following relief measures for ISAGO-registered Ground Service Providers (GSP) to manage the impact of the COVID-19:

- Extenuating circumstances are applied to ISAGO Registrations and Station Accreditations if, because of the COVID-19, renewal audits cannot be performed or a performed audit cannot be closed prior to the ISAGO Registration or Station Accreditation expiry date.
- The extenuating circumstances grants up to 180 days following the expiry date to perform the renewal audit or up to 90 days to close the audit.
- Expiry dates for renewed ISAGO Registrations and Station Accreditations under extenuating circumstance are revised based on the date of the renewal audit.
- Provisions related to health & safety and business continuity aspects will be captured to build up trust in the operations,
- The ISAGO recovery plan involves a sizeable reduction of the auditing standards (to critical minima/ safety-relevant during crisis), and the use of remote auditing, thereby permitting a significantly reduced audit price.

Extenuating circumstances were initially granted to all ISAGO Registrations and Station Accreditations that were due to expire up to end of July 2020. The eligibility period was subsequently extended to end of September 2020 and will be further reviewed on a monthly basis. All audits that are currently unclosed have been offered extenuating circumstances if needed.

These are temporary measures with conditions on ISAGO Registration and Station Accreditation time validity before on-site audits can be performed or resumed. They are also optional if a full audit can be performed efficiently and safely, and unconditional registration can be achieved. The recovery plan is expected to be in operation until at least April 2021.

Initial audits for ISAGO Registration or Station Accreditation are not eligible for extenuating circumstances.



### 3. Remote Audit

Travel restrictions, limited flights, and quarantine requirements have in several cases prevented the conduct of a conventional ISAGO Audit. The existing option to perform a remote (not onsite) documentation review as part of a Headquarters Audit will be extended to cover all ISAGO Registration and Station Accreditation renewal audits that are given extenuating circumstances. Eliminating auditor travel and accommodation immediately cuts the cost of the audit, which is further reduced by using a reduced set of standards.

The Remote Audit has to be conducted and closed within the given period of extenuating circumstances.

### 4. Interim ISAGO Standards Manual

A special edition of the ISAGO Standards Manual (interim GOSM) is in development. This manual will outline a reduced set of standards for audits conducted remotely and for audits onsite as a follow-up to a remote audit, which are still required at some time thereafter to assess the implementation of the standards. A reduction of around 50% is achievable determined by the following criteria, recognizing that the full set of standards were previously audited and conformity was achieved and maintained:

- ICAO Doc 10121, *Manual on Ground Handling*, as a baseline.
- Management of change (coping with recovery – returning staff, new customers etc.).
- Procedures identified as Red Safety Risk in the IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM).
- Standards with notable findings in previous ISAGO audits.
- There will be a few new standards that address personnel health (in line with authority requirements or recommendations).

### 5. Onsite Follow-up Audit

Thereafter and when practicable, the remote audit will be complemented by an Onsite Follow-Up Audit, whereupon the audit team will assess implementation, using Auditor Observations, of the applicable standards outlined in the Interim GOSM. The Onsite Follow-Up Audit has to be conducted and closed within a further period of six months from the closure date of the Remote Audit.

Closure of both the remote and onsite follow-up audits completes the ISAGO Registration or Station Accreditation renewal process. A new ISAGO Registration or Station Accreditation period of two years will commence from the date of the Remote Audit closing meeting.

### 6. ISAGO Audit Reports and Extenuating Circumstances Questionnaires

GSPs are required periodically to submit questionnaires during the period of extenuating circumstances. An Extenuating Circumstances Questionnaire (ECQ) provides information on the status of the management systems and measures taken by the GSP to manage safety while in crisis and in recovery. The ECQs are posted on the ISAGO Registry to complement the audit reports

### 7. ISAGO Registry

ISAGO is an accepted means of conformity in the IATA Operators Safety Audit (IOSA) for oversight of outsourced ground operations. The ISAGO Registry consists of over 200 GSPs and there are over 500 audit reports in the ISAGO registry available to airlines that are ISAGO members.

Whilst there are a few states today that have embedded the ISAGO program in their regulations to complement their safety oversight. ISAGO Registration is also required at some airports and by some airlines. In the current crisis, where onsite auditing presents various challenges, we encourage airlines to adopt ISAGO as their means of oversight or where seeking information for new ground operations.



## 8. Quality Assurance

We recognize that many GSPs will be operating with minimum staff during the current crisis. Additionally, for GSPs accepting any new business, without being a burden, safety continues to remain a priority in the industry. We cannot afford to be complacent amidst this crisis. To ensure the integrity of the ISAGO program, during this time, there have also been enhancements to the quality oversight program.

ISAGO Auditors will be subject to remote oversight. To maintain the high quality and accuracy of reports, while also building regulatory confidence in audit programs, the IATA QA team and GOC are exploring a few options and alternative methods for QA oversight, quality control check of the reports and auditors' performance.

Oversight will be achieved through potential shadowing of the audit teams during remote ISAGO audits, by having interviews with auditors during every stage of the audit, i.e. preparation, audit conduct and follow-up, and by reviewing and verifying the assessments made by auditors in the audit software.

Several options are being explored and IATA is going to develop the most suitable solution. The quality control area is seeing the benefits from the Audit Programs Digital Transformation. The analysis of business intelligence from the audit reports brings meaningful insight into ISAGO Auditor performance while driving consistent assessments and improvements and securing the agility of the entire system.

## 9. Implementation

IATA expects the ISAGO program to restart in July, therefore the measures need to be in place early June. The restart will not be universal nor consistent. The ISAGO Support Program and recovery plan are therefore under constant review and will be revised in alignment with program policies and industry best practices.

To support industry, IATA will develop and publish information on the changes to the program and standards, how it will affect all stakeholders and guidance on implementation. Program changes to implement the support program will be captured in a temporary revision to the ISAGO program manual. Training will also be provided.

Recurrent training of the ISAGO Auditors will include guidance on the ISAGO support program and audit conduct changes. The currency requirements to maintain membership of the Charter of Professional Auditors (an ISAGO requirement) will also be reviewed to ensure that auditors are not unduly disadvantaged by the situation.

To assist in the gradual move towards alignment with regulatory provisions, such as the ICAO Manual on Ground Handling, IATA is producing guidance material and training aimed at new entrants in the scope of regulations. Training will be available to GSPs on the primary feature of the ICAO Manual, the Safety Management System, and how it specifically applies in their domain.

## 10. Future

The future for ISAGO (adopted pre-COVID-19) is to align with new international provisions for ground operations published by ICAO and, perhaps sometime soon, the European Union. IATA continues to push for regulatory recognition, such that ISAGO is recognized as a suitable means of compliance with the provisions.

IATA and the GOC will continue to advocate ISAGO to make up for the lack of airline auditing resources and as a valuable and quick access source of information where new destinations and new providers are considered.

ISAGO also aims to rise to the challenge of advanced technology and automation introduced into ground operations and aircraft design, risk-based or targeted audits, assessment of effective implementation, and applicable new transmissible health risks and occupational health requirements. IATA's digital transformation project will provide essential input to improve the ISAGO program, its auditors, and the quality and usefulness of the audit reports.