

Remote Audits - The Digital Future of Audits



On the safe side.

Globalization and digitization are two of the current topics facing businesses operating in markets around the world. Audits and certifications according to accepted international standards are in place to provide the checks and balances to ensure compliant processes and products. Modern communication technologies now make it possible to conduct off-site assessment audits. These remote audits are particularly advantageous for companies with several locations spread throughout a particular country, region, or even the world. We will inform you about the procedures as well as the challenges and advantages of these forward-looking audit methods.

What are remote audits?

So-called remote audits are a new form of auditing in which the physical presence of an auditor is no longer absolutely necessary. Instead, the tester simply switches on remotely using a wide range of technical options, such as a telephone or webcam. This allows audits to be carried out quickly and easily from multiple locations over long distances.

Remote audits were first addressed as an accepted method in the revision of the DIN EN ISO 19011:2018 standard guideline for auditing management systems.

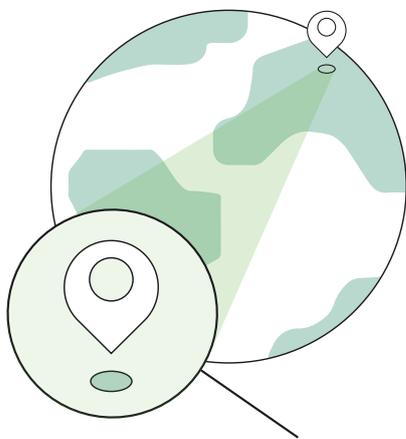
There, the individual remote methods are differentiated as follows, depending on requirements and scope:

- **Fully Remote:** The audit is performed entirely using remote techniques - from planning to execution to follow-up control.
- **Partly Remote:** The audit is only partially performed

using remote techniques, while the auditor is temporarily physically present.

- **Remote Follow-up:** The follow-up measures are checked and post-audits are carried out using remote techniques.
- **Expert Remote:** Off-site experts can be consulted from anywhere in the world.

Benefits from remote audit solutions



- ✓ Higher flexibility
- ✓ Shorter setup time
- ✓ Simultaneous auditing at different locations
- ✓ Experts available on short notice
- ✓ Eliminate travel to save both time and money

Who are remote audits suitable for?

Expectations placed on performance audits have changed due to increasing globalization and the ongoing technical developments of recent years. Companies want audit results to be available quickly and across sites. As a result, more and more businesses are requesting digital test protocols and reports.

For a long time now, companies have no longer been limited to one location and classic linear processes - from

development to production and sales. Instead, worldwide distribution channels and digitally-networked production areas dominate today's economy.

An audit often has to cover the entire value chain of a product. Companies with multiple locations - whether national or international - benefit most from the flexible solutions provided by the remote methodology.

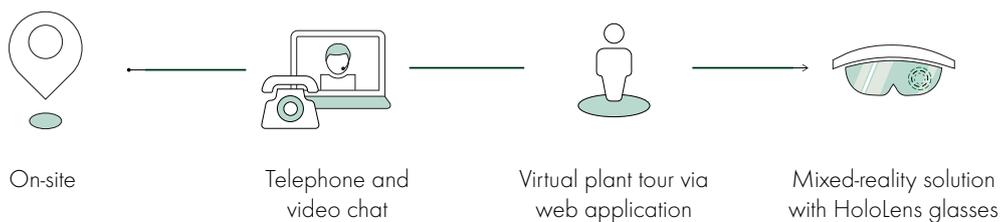
Tools and the future of remote audits

Familiar methods such as telephone conferences or video chats are commonly used for remote audits. Audits can therefore be easily carried out without great effort, high travel costs or expensive technology. However, in order to meet the increasing developments and expectations of companies and customers and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our services, our experts also use various computer assisted auditing techniques (CAAT) to carry out remote audits. This enables us to cope at a faster pace and quickly deliver results across locations.

As part of technical development, our experts in Finland, for example, are using a prototype of a web application to inspect systems. Much like Google Street View, this application maps and records production areas allowing the auditor to move through the area on his mobile phone. Measuring points and notes are immediately displayed and compared with the real environment.

In the near future, it is also conceivable that digital audits will be carried out using so-called mixed-reality solutions. Our developers are currently working on approaches with HoloLens glasses, for example, with which the auditor can actually see relevant areas in the field of vision.

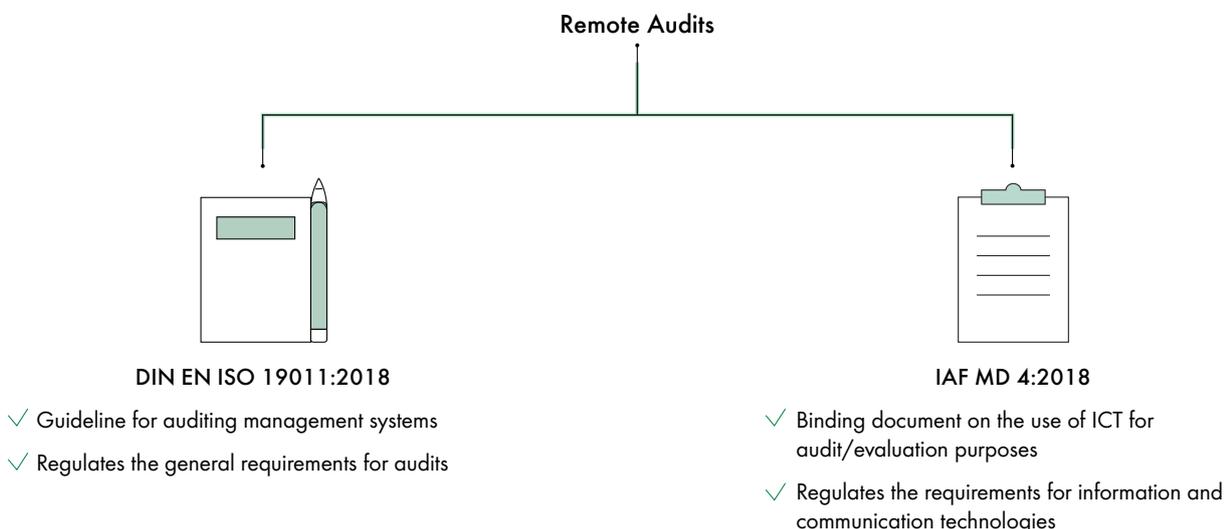
The future development of remote audits



Normative principles for digital audits

First and foremost, DIN EN ISO 19011:2018 is the guideline for auditing management systems and contains the requirements that an audit must meet. Since the revision in 2011, it also talks about virtual activities and remote audits. Eight years ago, for example, demands for remote audits were addressed with regard to the protection and confidentiality of documents and data.

Furthermore, the binding IAF (International Accreditation Forum) document IAF MD 4:2018 serves as the basis for remote audits. This is a “Binding document on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for audit/assessment purposes” and applies to certification bodies. The document is a kind of guideline for the auditing and assessment of management systems, persons and products.



Challenges of remote audits



Technology: The company to be audited must have the necessary hardware and software. In the best case, the same as with the auditor.



Readiness: The success of the audit also depends strongly on willingness and confidence in the new procedure.



Knowledge: The corresponding technical know-how is required on both sides to ensure a smooth process.



Security: The necessary data protection requirements and internal security regulations of the company must be ensured in advance.



Preparation: In order to avoid possible conflicts and risks, appropriate preparation as well as the development of a suitable audit routine in the run-up to the review is important. Therefore, the initial audit should not yet take place as a remote audit.

How can DEKRA support the client?

We have been active and internationally recognized as a neutral and independent testing service provider for several decades. Over the years, we have gained extensive experience and knowledge which helps us in our daily auditing routine. Our specialists closely follow technical and economic developments and are therefore aware of all relevant progress and every trend. Our practical know-how and in-depth knowledge of audit methods and technologies make us the right partner for your project. From information on the latest developments in remote audits to data protection and IT security in accordance with **ISO 27001**, we can provide you with comprehensive support.

Are you interested in conducting remote audits and would like to find out more? Talk to our experts today!

DEKRA Audits

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