Greetings!

Are you a new client interested in Eco-rating Certification? Are preparing for an oncoming Eco-rating audit? Are you wondering what Eco-rating audit involves? Is it your first time to be Eco-rated? Are you planning to renew your Eco-rating Certification?

This week’s Eco-byte wishes to answer some of our frequently asked questions on the Eco-rating Certification audit process. The Eco-byte outlines the audit process an accommodation facility goes through to assess compliance with the Ecotourism Kenya, Eco-rating Certification standard for accommodation facilities.

**How long does an Eco-rating Certification audit last?**
The audit lasts for approximately 3 – 6 hours depending on the size of your facility, operations and location of key departments.

**What happens during the audit day?**
On the day of the audit, the auditors will have an opening meeting with the top management (Director, Manager, or Assistant Manager) or the Heads of Department (HODS) such as the Executive / head chef, Chief engineer / Head of maintenance, CSR Coordinator / Community Liaison Officer, Clinical Officer, Purchasing manager/ Store keeper, Head of housekeeping etc.

In other circumstances, the auditors may decide to have an opening meeting with only the Top management most often the hotel manager; and meet HOD’s at their respective departments.

**What documentation is needed?**
At the opening meeting, the auditors will confirm documentation to be previewed in addition to the support documents that you will have already provided. The documentation may be reviewed at the opening meeting, during the site audit process or after. This documentation includes (but is not limited to):

- A copy of the latest Annual Environmental Audit report
- Latest copy of effluent test/ sample results
- An Effluent Discharge License
- A copy of the latest Fire Audit report
- A copy of the latest Annual Health And Safety Audit report
- Firefighting training records (copy of issued certificate and list of trained individuals)
- First aid training records (copy of issued certificate and list of trained individuals)
- Registration of Workplace Certificate and legal Business Operation Licenses
- A copy of Environmental Policy and Environmental Management System
- Available reports on conservation initiatives such as such on wildlife or nature
Any available support documents / progress reports on your CSR
Copies of the latest medical tests on food handlers.
Any other relevant document that shows your sustainability credentials or business practices.

Who are involved in the audit process?
All members of staff are involved as they may be called upon randomly to explain respective sectional processes or answer questions. Hence, it is highly advisable to ensure prior communication is made to your team of staff for efficiency during the process. In addition the auditors may interview neighbouring communities.

Which areas do the auditors visit?
The auditors visit your entire premises with attention to major areas such as;
- Guest rooms / tents: they will sample the different types of rooms / tents within the premises
- Main kitchens, restaurants (both guests and staff areas)
- Main store (including dry store, walk-in fridges and cold rooms)
- Waste management section / disposal / recycling areas / composting section
- Kitchen gardens, irrigation areas, swimming pools,
- Waste water treatment system / plant (including kitchen grease traps, manholes, septic tanks, soak -pits / soakaways etc.)
- Offices: human resources, purchasing, engineering / maintenance, housekeeping etc.
- Chemical store (swimming pool, hazardous chemical store etc.)
- Public areas of the hotel such as restrooms, and hotel grounds
- Staff quarters, canteen, information board, recreation areas etc
- Support areas (workshop, garage / vehicle service bay, carwash, laundry)
- Water sources (including metering, reservoirs)
- Energy sources (generator section, fuel and gas storage / filing station)
- Clinic

Who accompanies the auditor during the site audit?
The auditors require to be accompanied by at least one of the top management staff who is familiar with the facility operations. In most scenarios, A Senior Manager or the Engineer / Head of maintenance are usually well placed for the audit process.

Do the auditors provide feedback at the end of site audit?
At the end of the audit, the auditors normally briefs the top management and key team members on the major highlights of the audit and may also request further information or seek clarification.

Ecotourism Kenya would like to ensure that facilities find the audit a valuable experience; hence we encourage you and your team to ask as many questions during the auditor’s visit. The team of auditors are well trained and experienced thus would be glad to provide improvement suggestions and solutions that should enhance your sustainability programme.
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