

## Successful recertification of Alcosuisse



**Quality management systems have been a firmly established part of business life for a long time now. They enable the providers of goods and services to give their clients suitable evidence in order to instil the necessary trust in their products and services. That is why Alcosuisse has been certified to ISO 9001 for over ten years. The registered certificate attests that the quality management system is in compliance with national and international regulatory requirements.**

Every quality assurance system requires regular auditing and monitoring by a recognised and independent external certification body. As a certificate is valid for only three years from the time of issue and the revised ISO 9001:2008 standard had to be incorporated into the existing quality assurance system in November 2010, a recertification audit was carried out at Alcosuisse last October. This is more exacting than the two surveillance audits carried out during the certificate's period of validity.

The recertification audit is conducted on the basis of the same scheme and criteria as the initial audit. In particular, the content of the management documentation and the company organisation are audited to ensure they are still up to date in the light of any changes in the prevailing circumstances. At Alcosuisse, all ISO standard audits are conducted by an auditor from the Swiss Association for Quality and Management Systems (SQS). The auditor thoroughly examines the entire company from both a business and qualitative perspective, i.e. the head office in Bern and at least one of the storage plants in Delémont (JU) and Schachen (LU), as well as the management and quality management system planning and support areas.

### Audit in detail

To prepare for the certification audit of the company, the auditor first has to be supplied with quality-related documents. These include all 11 chapters of the QMS handbook, the protocol accompanied by management review documents, which also make it possible to assess the system's performance, as well as internal audit reports. These enable the auditor to get an up-to-date picture of the auditee beforehand and check whether the QMS documents are complete and unambiguous, have a logical structure with references, and the content conforms to the standard requirements. The onsite audit commences with an introductory discussion concerning the planned procedure. In accordance with the agreed agenda, the following general items are discussed with those responsible (i.e. management and quality management system) and audited using the official standard checklist:

- Responsibility of management
- Quality policy
- Availability of personnel and material resources
- Training
- Management review
- General and document requirements
- Handling of documents and errors
- Monitoring and measurement, data analysis and general improvements
- Internal audits

In addition, company practice, i.e. realisation processes, is audited and procedures assessed onsite with those responsible for practice-oriented areas (namely purchasing, marketing/sales and storage plants). In the process, the standard checklist is also used to take a close look at the following aspects and verify the implementation of regulations:

- Procurement
- Infrastructure
- Work environment
- Procedures and records
- Handling of monitoring and measurement tools
- Product and service provision
- Client-oriented processes
- Handling of defective products and services
- General improvements and developments

After completion of the 1.5-day intensive examination, a final interview takes place. During this, the auditor presents the results of the audit and also mentions any observations and deviations, giving indications of necessary corrective measures as well as possible potential for improvement. The audit report documents the results of the audit and serves as evidence of the degree to which the quality management system meets the standard requirements. The SQS Committee of Experts decides whether to certify the company based on the audit report and the recommendation of the auditor.

### **Passed with flying colours**

Alcosuisse passed the recertification audit conducted in October 2010 without any weak points, and thus without any conditions. Consequently, its certificate was renewed for a further three years. The auditor was once again impressed by the high degree of efficiency and low error rate at Alcosuisse. Utmost importance is always attached to client service and its market performance, including reliable processing, is exemplary. In addition, the auditor considered the quality assurance handbook to be of a high standard. Combined with the practice of the fully equipped and well-maintained storage plants in Delémont and Schachen, these positive points bode well for continued client satisfaction in terms of quality.

*Urs Zauner, Alcosuisse  
Bern, 1st February 2011*