

SECTION 820 Independent Assurance Program

820.1 Scope

The Independent Assurance Program (IAP) is an important aspect of WisDOT's Quality Assurance Program. The goal of the IAP is to ensure that test data derived from project acceptance testing is reliable; this is accomplished by evaluating all active samplers and testers performing acceptance testing on WisDOT projects. Independent Assurance (IA) evaluations may include one or more of the following:

1. Split sample testing.
2. Proficiency sample testing.
3. Witnessing sampling and testing.
4. Test equipment calibration checks.
5. Reviewing contract-required data and available contractor process control information.
6. Requesting that testing personnel perform additional sampling and testing.

820.2 Federal Requirements

The department's IAP is federally mandated by FHWA via the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), as per §637.207(a) from the 23 CFR 637:

"Each STD's quality assurance program shall provide for an acceptance program and an independent assurance program..."

The IAP evaluations are to be handled without conflict or bias. 23 CFR 637 defines the IAP evaluations as follows:

"Activities that are an unbiased and independent evaluation of all the sampling and testing procedures used in the acceptance program"

The IAP is mandated by the FHWA. The purpose is to confirm the reliability of the test results obtained in the acceptance sampling and testing program. This is accomplished by observing sampling and testing procedures, as well as obtaining split portions of acceptance samples. Split samples are tested using equipment and operators different from those used for acceptance testing. The test results are then compared to the acceptance test results. If these test results do not compare favorably, follow-up actions are taken to discover and correct the deficiencies.

IAP personnel will evaluate the sampling and testing personnel and equipment of both the contractor and the department. The program covers sampling procedures, testing procedures, and testing equipment. The testing equipment will be evaluated by calibration checks, split samples, or proficiency samples. Testing personnel will be evaluated by observation, review of the control charts and documentation, and split samples or proficiency samples.

FHWA requires states to have an independent assurance program for federal aid projects. The states develop their own program content using FHWA prescribed guidelines. FHWA concurrence with the IAP is necessary before implementation by the state. It is department policy to apply the program to all state funded projects except those specifically exempted.

Management of this program at the region level is the responsibility of the Independent Assurance Engineering specialist. In this function, the specialist is considered a representative of the Central Laboratory responsible to the BTS, Materials Management program engineer.

It is important that all IAP activities are completely independent of project management activities, though close cooperation between the two is essential. It is also particularly important that project personnel appreciate the importance of the IAP and cooperate fully to accomplish its intended purpose.

Specific detailed instruction and guides relative to the samples and tests undertaken in this program are not described here, since the instructions and guides are of primary concern to the Independent Assurance engineering specialist and have little value to project personnel. The region Independent Assurance specialist may be contacted to obtain copies of the WisDOT IAP.