

INCARES: Professional or Self Audit? In 2016 it's your choice.

Anna Knust, MS

VET Environmental Engineering, LLC

Facility audits are the core of the Indiana Certified Automotive Recycler Exemplary Standards (INCARES) program. Members are certified using a rigorous and dynamic auditing system developed by VET. VET performs professional audits in odd-numbered years and INCARES members may self-audit in even-numbered years, although we always recommend a professional audit for thoroughness and objectivity. Entrance audits for prospective INCARES members must be conducted by VET to maintain the program's integrity, high standards, and consistency.

So what's the difference? Why pay for a professional audit? What will you do in 2016? This article will lay out the pros and cons of both options so you can decide what makes sense for your business. A professional audit means VET's experienced staff will thoroughly inspect your facility with you, and evaluate it based on our 87 criteria.

The advantages of a professional audit are:

- Your facility score can increase (or decrease). A professional audit is required for a facility to increase its audit score and/or certification level.
- VET inspects your facility with you and evaluates each audit item. We see things you may not because we have a different perspective and are practiced in evaluating auto recyclers.
- You get professional advice during one-on-one time with VET's experienced staff. We can identify what is working for you, what isn't, and provide recommendations for improvement.
- If VET does your storm water or spill prevention plans, or you use VET's software, we will evaluate compliance with all applicable requirements during our visit at no additional cost to you. This saves you money and us a trip to your facility.
- No worrying if you did the audit correctly or completely. We give you peace of mind.
- A visit to your facility makes it easier for us to consult on any issues that may arise in the future.
- VET's audit and comments will be objective, rigorous, and detailed.
- VET takes all the photos and does all the paperwork.

There are some disadvantages to a professional audit, too. For example, coordinating audit timing with VET can be more difficult than performing the audit on your own schedule. The biggest issue in your mind is probably cost. A professional INCARES audit costs \$750. What are you paying for? With a professional audit, you benefit from VET's expertise, advice, and support through the audit process and beyond, including our site visit and managing all the associated paperwork. A self-audit means you inspect your facility with the same 87 criteria.

Advantages to a self-audit are:

- It's cheaper. A self-audit costs \$250. What you are paying for if you are auditing yourself? VET verifies your self-audit through pictures that you submit with your audit form. VET will provide support as needed through the audit process.
- You can perform the audit when it's convenient for you.

- You use the same audit form VET uses.

Disadvantages to a self-audit include:

- It is common for owner/managers to put things off and miss deadlines concerning compliance tasks. If you choose a professional audit, it's on us to get it done on time.
- VET's audit form is comprehensive and time-consuming to fill out correctly, especially if you are not familiar with the form.
- Self-audit scores may decrease or stay the same, but no increase in score (or certification level) is allowed on a self-audit.
- Subjectivity: it's your business. It can be difficult to evaluate yourself honestly!
- You need to take lots of photos, organize and send them to VET for audit verification.
- Things slip through the cracks. You see your yard every day and may not notice everything, or you may not be aware of a specific requirement. We are trained to notice.
- Paperwork.

VET evaluates yards all over Indiana and Illinois. We pride ourselves on holding all facilities to the same high compliance standards, while recognizing that each facility is unique and may reach those standards in different ways. As a facility owner or manager, you strive to maintain compliance but are inherently subjective. As an analogy, think of all the INCARES members as a basketball team. VET is the coach. Your facility is a player on the team, and you are his or her parent. As a coach, VET is uniquely equipped to see the strengths and weaknesses of each player. As a parent, you will always see your child differently than the other players. Your own child is always smarter, stronger, prettier. I know mine are! A professional audit is similar to letting the coach run practice and make the starting lineup. A self-audit is like having a parent do those jobs.

If a professional audit is right for you in 2016, or if you have any questions about INCARES or the auditing process, let us know. If you are not already an INCARES member, contact VET or ARI to find out more about the program. We love hearing from you and learning more about how we can serve your needs and those of our industry.

Now your INCARES certification may mean even more! Through VET's new partnership with R&D Insurance, LLC you may be able to capitalize on your investment in environmental and safety compliance by reducing your insurance premiums. We recently sent surveys to our INCARES members about this. We received many interested responses. If you have not contacted VET about this opportunity, please let us know your thoughts. We wish you a prosperous and safe 2016!

Got Compliance?