



UL's 2021 Monitoring Station Audit - Information Update

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The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 brought the concepts of remote inspection, virtual audits, and working from home into full-fledged practical use, at a speed few would have predicted. The experience was a dramatic demonstration of the value of collaborative problem solving and clear communications. In that spirit, UL would like to share plans for 2021.

Standards and Confirmation of Compliance

Developing requirements that aligned with COVID-19 public health risk mitigations brought focus and visibility to the Standards making process. While the experience was new to many, TMA's UL Standards committee has been productively engaged in driving change for many years and continues to work an active agenda intended to keep the Standards current and relevant.

As Standards change, UL's Certification Programs do also, incorporating new technical requirements into the annual audit process for monitoring stations. The 2021 audit cycle will include focus on the last 2 sets of revisions to UL827, Standard for Central Stations Services

Work From Home

On October 27, 2020, UL827 was revised to adapt Sec 51, Operation During a Regional/National Disruption. These requirements were developed by a Task Group of monitoring industry subject matter experts and built on early UL Guidelines for operating during the pandemic (published on March 16). They achieved ANSI consensus through UL's Collaborative Standards Development Process to become part of the American National Standard.

For purposes of application within UL's Certificate Program, Sec 51 was considered effective upon publication. During the 2021 audit cycle, UL staff will assess compliance for stations using remotely located operators under current COVID-19 mitigation conditions, and those stations that plan to do so in the event of future national or regional disruptions.

In early April, UL will publish details intended to clarify the evidence of compliance that UL auditors will look for during the 2021 audit.

As the nation's vaccination campaign progresses, governmental emergency declarations and associated health safety guidance will change. Early indications suggest that there will not be a universal "all clear" lifting of scientifically based health guidelines, but rather a gradual reduction in social distancing metrics, with dependency on vaccination status, COVID variant emergence, and other variables. UL envisions working with monitoring stations to determine applicability of Sec 51 requirements, based on conditions in their location, with the goal of distilling universal guidelines for handling the dynamically evolving situation.

At the same time, TMA's UL Standards Committee is making a UL827 revision proposal for requirements that would enable a monitoring-from-home option under any conditions. The Committee has addressed concerns brought forward during the emergency conditions discussions, but the proposal is in the very early stages of the consensus process.

If adapted, stations will continue to have a continued monitor-from-home option. However, stations should start planning for returning operators to in-station duty in the event that there is a gap between lifting of emergency conditions and adoption of non-emergency condition home based monitoring requirements.

Cybersecurity and Power Supply Requirements

On April 11, 2019, UL827 was revised to include new requirements for secondary power supplies and cybersecurity measures. These requirements were developed by TMA's UL Standards Committee and went through 2 public comment periods as part of the consensus process.

UL's pre-pandemic 2020 audit plan included focus on compliance with these requirements. Those plans had to be deferred when priorities shifted to operating safely within health and safety mandates.

As shared in the Summer 2019 *TMA Dispatch* newsletter, revisions were made in Section 11, Power Supply, and Section 17, Central Station Automation Systems. Material that could have potentially significant impact includes secondary power requirements in paragraph 11.5.1 and Table 11.1, and cybersecurity requirements in paragraph 17.15, along with its references.

For purposes of application within UL's Certificate Program, these requirements will be effective 12/31/2022. This means UL Certification beyond that date is contingent on demonstration of compliance.

UL's formal notice to Certification holders will be sent in early April and will include a plain language explanation of the requirements. In addition, UL will offer Town Hall style webinars (date/time to be announced shortly) to review the requirements and audit expectations.

During the 2021 audit cycle, UL staff will assess compliance status with the new requirements. Corrective action on any items of noncompliance will be assessed during the 2022 audit cycle.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your UL auditor or any of the following:

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