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IATF Common Audit Report Application (CARA) What Is It?





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What is CARA and How Does it Work?

Released in Fall of 2020, the International Automotive Task Force's CARA – the Common Audit Report Application – was introduced with the intention of ensuring more consistent completion and reporting of IATF audits. The formatting of CARA includes each of the five audit types listed in the IATF Rules 5th edition: stage 1 readiness review, stage 2 certification, surveillance, recertification, and special audits.

But how does CARA work? When development of the new system began, there was some speculation that the final product might have a resemblance to the OASIS (Online Aerospace Supplier Information System) database used by the aerospace industry. However, CARA was ultimately revealed to be not a database of certified companies or suppliers, but a web-browser based audit reporting tool. Each IATF auditor and certification body (CB) holds unique credentials in order to utilize CARA and prepare audit content. Prepared contents reside solely on the user's browser until they are exported in one of the possible output formats (please see below for further information on CARA outputs).

Differences in the Audit Process

Both Perry Johnson Registrars and the IATF strongly believe that there should be no noticeable difference in how the audit process feels to clients when using CARA. There is however one particular change that is worthy of note. Per IATF Rules 5th Edition Sanctioned Interpretation 16 auditors are now permitted to allocate up to 15% of their onsite time to writing reports, as opposed to the 10% that was previously permitted.

The Nonconformance Process with CARA

While the audit process itself should not feel any different to how they were conducted “pre-CARA,” the system of responding to nonconformances has been drastically altered.

Previously, clients were accustomed to being sent a file (typically a Microsoft Word document) by their auditor via email, dropbox, or flash drive. This file detailed all nonconformances found by the auditor, and would be used by the client to document their responses to each point – typically then sent back to the auditor with the necessary evidence attached. Under CARA the principles remain the same, but the methodology has changed greatly.



Rather than the auditor preparing the nonconformances in something like a Word document, the nonconformances are compiled within the CARA application itself. These are given to the client (via email, flash drive, etc.) in the form of a “JSON” file – or multiple files depending upon the number of nonconformances noted. While the JSON file cannot be opened or edited outside of CARA (attempting to do so will result in an error message), the client can load the JSON file provided by the auditor into the web browser application found at: <https://nc-cara.iatfglobaloversight.org>.

Once the JSON file is uploaded, each nonconformance can be individually opened and responded to within the application. While the nonconformance is opened for editing, users may review the: statement of nonconformity, evidence of nonconformity, and the specified requirement. If any part of the nonconformance is inaccurate or misconstrued, it is crucial to notify the auditor quickly; PJR's deadline to file a dispute remains 15 calendar days from the conclusion of the audit.

Once the nonconformances have been reviewed and are understood, users are able to respond to them. Each response must include: a correction or containment (including timing and responsible party(ies)), evidence of implementation (including related document numbers, dated training records, etc.), root cause analysis (intended to show analysis of cause, not only the root cause result), root cause analysis files (optional - e.g. fishbone diagrams, etc.), root cause result, root cause result files (optional; as appropriate), systemic corrective action(s) (must include both timing and responsible person(s)), evidence of implementation (applicable to corrective action portions of the response), and evidence of implementation files (each item listed in “evidence of implementation” should have a related piece of evidence provided).

The final fields to complete when addressing each nonconformance require users to provide content that verifies the effective implementation of their response(s), both by describing actions taken and verifying the efficacy of those actions.

Once the required information has been inputted, the “Save NCs for Auditor” option will create a new JSON file that will be returned to the auditor for review and approval. Other options at this stage include printing a copy of the report and saving it as an XML file. If the auditor or veto reviewer takes issue with one or more of the responses provided, their concerns will be outlined in the “Reviewer Comments” field in another JSON file, which will be shared similarly to the process previously described.

Once final approval has been achieved, a finalized JSON file will be shared, showing the approval for internal record-keeping purposes.

A common question PJR has fielded since the implementation of CARA is whether an in-house corrective action format can still be used to record responses. Unfortunately with the release of CARA, individual systems will no longer be permitted. While these internal processes may absolutely be put to use for developing responses, the official submission of responses to nonconformances must be done via the CARA application and the relevant JSON files.



Learn More About CARA

Questions about CARA? Looking for a more in-depth guide to addressing nonconformances within the application? The IATF has developed their own “wiki” style information page with detailed information and a helpful tutorial video. The wiki can be accessed at: <https://infosysc.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/CARANC/overview>.

PJR has also developed two training videos that walk the viewer through the basic steps of interfacing with CARA – these can be found at the following URLs:

Part 1 - <https://pjview.wistia.com/medias/0146uxriu9>

Part 2 - <https://pjview.wistia.com/medias/z91eewku69>

For more information on IATF certification or if you have questions regarding PJR's use of CARA, visit our website at www.pjr.com or call us at (248) 358-3388.

