

## SHORT FEATURE

# Pandemic and Workplace Assessment of Safety and Hygiene (WASH)

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**T**HE Covid-19 pandemic has presented an enormous global challenge requiring interventions at unprecedented scales. For controlling the spread of the virus the government imposed a lockdown in March 2020 and has had to take several other precautionary measures for mitigating the pandemic threat in view of the phase-wise unlocking keeping in view the threat to human life and also economic distress.

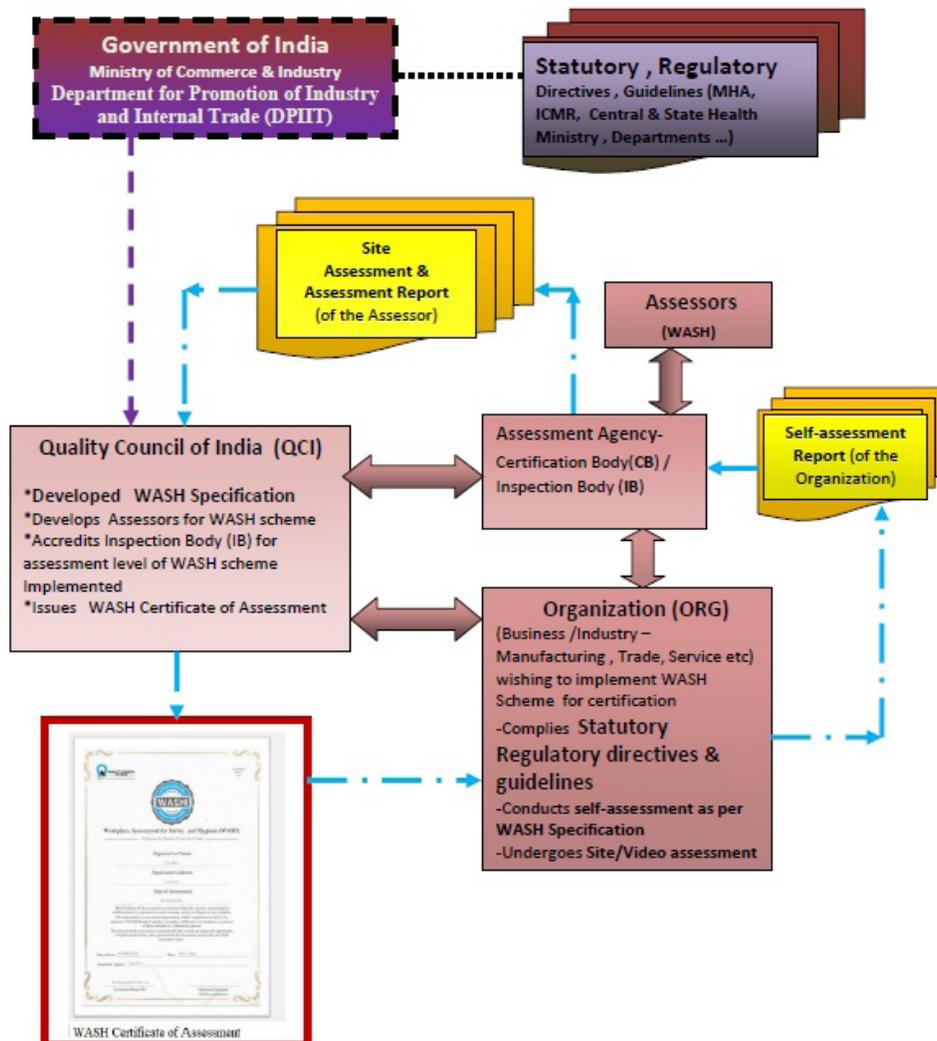
The Quality Council of India (QCI) is an institution of the Government of India whose mission is to keep an eye nationwide on the quality of product & services movement involving all spheres of activities primarily for promoting and protecting interests of the nation and its citizens. In the present scenario, the production and business landscape calls for larger focus on health, safety and hygiene of employees, visitors, customers, suppliers and the public at

large. This requires bringing in very specific standards/protocols for the manufacturing, business organizations, and institutions to ensure that they are able to operate and maintain safety in view of the COVID-19 threat.

QCI has initiated and formulated a management specification for mitigation of COVID-19 related health risks in the workplace called Workplace Assessment of Safety and Hygiene (WASH), to provide an objective assessment of the workplace and its operations to prevent safety and health related risks and hazards arising out of COVID-19.

The WASH standard is applicable to any workplace (Manufacturing, Service-IT/non-IT, Consulting, Trade, Education, Travel & Tourism, Hospitality, Healthcare, Food, ITES,

Schematic diagram of the Workplace Assessment of Safety and Hygiene (WASH) Standard



## Key Elements of the WASH Standard



Source : Quality Council of India (QCI)

Labs etc. of any size (large or MSME) that has been allowed to operate. However, the areas that are under quarantine or those workplaces that need an expert medical/related assessment/advice are not covered under the scope of this Standard.

Though the Standard has been built applying state-of-the-art management tools e.g. Deming Cycle, in order to make it fit for the entire spectrum of workplaces, the other associated aspects i.e. quality, social, environmental, security or financial management have been excluded. Therefore, the WASH specification aims to provide the applicant organisation with a holistic report on the preparedness of its system and processes related to hygiene & safety with regards to COVID-19 risk mitigation.

The WASH specification has 15 key elements. The key elements have been divided into sections and sub-sections for strengthening the scheme's manageability, flexibility and performance. Each sub-section generates a specific requirement. There are 74 requirements, each categorised as Essential (71) or Desirable (3), and they are required to be complied based on the organisation's business/functional profiles. Assessment is carried out on all of the applicable requirements.

An organisation wishing to have the WASH Certification needs to identify the regulatory requirements of local, state and central government directives of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Central & State Ministry of

Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), etc. and other industry best practices and guidance to establish its own safety and hygiene principles for implementation in its workplace. The guidelines are required to be updated from time to time to keep them current. Accordingly, based on the organisation's business/processes and applicability of major elements related to Hygiene & Safety a unique WASH Checklist is generated for the organisation for implementation, compliance and certification.

The assessment is conducted subsequent to the undertaking by the applicant that all legal, statutory and regulatory compliances related to COVID-19 are in order. Applications can be received at any juncture of business operations, i.e. before re-start or during operations.

How to go ahead with WASH certification by an organisation?

**1) Application:** An organisation needs to apply using a prescribed application form developed by QCI to any assessment agency. The Assessment Agencies for this scheme are defined as the Certification Bodies/Inspection bodies (CB/IB) accredited by National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) of QCI that are also registered as Assessment Agencies under the WASH Scheme of QCI. The applicant may apply directly to QCI also.

**2) Self-assessment report:** A self-assessment checklist format is made available with the application form. The organisation completes the self-

assessment form with associated documents and records and furnishes the report to the CB/IB.

**3) Assessor:** The CB/IB nominates an Assessor (WASH) for evaluation of the self-assessment and conducting On-site/Video Assessment.

**4) Onsite/Video Assessment:** Nominated Assessor conducts On-site/Video Assessment on a mutually agreed date & time with the organisation.

**5) Assessment Report:** Assessor prepares the full Assessment Report in the format designed by QCI and submits the report to CB/IB & QCI for their evaluation towards issuance of WASH Certificate.

**6) QCI issues WASH Certificate of Assessment to the organisation.**

The WASH Scheme documents, list of assessment agencies (CB/IB) and all other associated information is available on the website of QCI at: <https://www.qcin.org/WashScheme.php>.

Already more than hundred organizations from government and a wide spectrum of private sectors (manufacturing steel and other metals, automotive, labs, jute, educational institution, airport, energy, biotech, food, hospital, export, pharmaceutical, hotel, resort, oil, fabrics, other services, etc.) have already been certified for WASH specification compliance. WASH is a volunteer scheme like ISO and any organisation according to their convenience may adopt this scheme.

Taking part in this scheme by a very large number of organizations in days to come is expected to boost the level of awareness of COVID-19 risk mitigation techniques & practices significantly within the people in the workplace, their family and all other stakeholders and thus significantly contribute to a COVID-19 risk-optimised state.

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