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Background

IRMA's assessment process

The IRMA independent mine assessment process

The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) oversees the only independent, comprehensive process for assessing individual mines' performance against an equally governed, consensus-based standard — the widely recognized IRMA Standard — and for measuring mines' subsequent progress in reducing social and environmental harm.

How the IRMA mine audit process works

- Audits against the IRMA Standard are conducted by third-party auditors who meet IRMA competency requirements and have received IRMA training.
- The rigorous IRMA process requires that those affected by a mine, including local community members and workers, must be given the opportunity to engage with the on-site auditing team and share their firsthand experiences and perspectives.
- An audit is announced in advance by IRMA and an IRMA-approved certification body. Prior to the on-site audit stage (see the step-by-step summary below), the certification body conducts additional outreach with affected parties.
- IRMA audits are in general conformance with established practices for independent audits (e.g., ISO 19011:2018 — Guidelines for Auditing Management Systems).
- In their evaluations, auditors apply scientific principles and professional judgment to reach evidence-based subjective interpretations. Auditors' judgments are based on the available facts, within the limits of existing data, scope of work, budget and timing.
- Audit evidence is sampled from available information, and therefore the audit process is subject to a measure of uncertainty. Any actions based on the audit conclusions should take this into consideration.

Steps in the IRMA assessment process

- **A mine begins the voluntary IRMA process** by completing a self-assessment and uploading data to an evidence-compiling tool on the IRMA website. When this self-assessment is complete, the assessment by third-party auditing firm can begin.
- **Stage 1** of the independent assessment is a desk review conducted by an IRMA-approved certification body, which assigns a team of auditors to review the self-assessment ratings and supporting evidence provided by the mine. During this stage, auditors may request additional information.
- **Stage 2** is the on-site visit, during which auditors make observations at the mine site, review additional materials and interview mine managers and workers, as well as affected community members, Indigenous rights holders and others.
- **Based on their observations**, interviews and evaluation of information gathered during Stage 1 and Stage 2, the auditors then determine how well the mine meets each of the relevant IRMA Standard requirements — i.e., fully, substantially, partially or not at all. The final decision on the mine's achievement level is made by the certification body.
- **Because this rigorous, transparent process is still evolving**, we encourage critical review of the initial audit results and welcome further insights from those directly affected by the audited mine's operations.

- **As the IRMA Standard is recognized** and adopted around the globe, these audits are helping to foster dialogue on potential further improvements between mining companies and those affected by their operations.
- **A global standard sets expectations** for the industry worldwide, discouraging operators from gravitating toward weaker regulatory environments. When leading purchasers of mined materials express consistent aims with regard to social and environmental responsibility, it sends a powerful message, encouraging governments to strengthen laws and oversight to better protect the environmental and social wellbeing of their citizens.

IRMA recognizes four levels of achievement

IRMA Transparency applies to any mine that consents to an independent audit by IRMA-approved auditors and releases the results publicly.

IRMA 50, IRMA 75 and IRMA 100 indicate progressively higher levels of performance against the IRMA Standard in its key areas of focus: Social Responsibility, Environmental Responsibility, Business Integrity and Planning for Positive Legacies.

For a complete description of the IRMA assessment process and achievement levels, please visit our website: responsiblemining.net.

Providing feedback to the mining company or IRMA

- Any queries about audit results or complaints about the auditing process can be submitted via the complaints and feedback page of the IRMA website, which includes detailed guidelines on the Issues Resolution Process, as well as a Complaint Form.
- As part of the rigorous assessment process, IRMA team members are responsible for evaluating all complaints and must make impartial efforts to resolve them — with full and transparent documentation.
- Complaints related to the conduct of an audit should be directed to the auditing firm. Our website has contact details for all mines currently undergoing IRMA assessment.
- If you have questions or concerns about a specific mine's performance, we encourage you to contact the company directly. The best practices that inform the IRMA Standard include the expectation that participating companies will respond to, and build dialogue with, communities, workers, civil society, governments, customers and investors.
- If you wish to provide feedback or submit a general complaint about any aspect of the assessment process, you are welcome to contact IRMA anytime via the web-based Complaint Form or by sending a message to issues@responsiblemining.net.
- For queries about the IRMA Standard and its requirements — what we're measuring and why — please contact info@responsiblemining.net.

For more information

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