

**OEM Website Audit Steering Committee  
Conference Call Notes  
December 16, 2004**

The fourth meeting of the OEM Website Audit Steering Committee took place by conference call on December 16, 2004. Participants on the call included Holly Pugliese (US EPA), John Cabaniss, John Daley, Eddie Ehlert, Bob Everett, Paul Foley, Charlie Gorman, Bill Haas, Dean Hermano, Aaron Lowe, Dave Scaler, Donnie Seyfer, Ron Turner and Mark Warren. Also on the call were Doran Stegura, Twohy Murray, and Monika Chandra from Perrin Quarles Associates, Inc.

**A. Introduction**

PQA began the meeting by asking the committee for comments on the meeting agenda. There were no additions or changes to the meeting agenda.

**B. Discussion Forum**

PQA requested comment on how well the discussion forum at the AASP New Jersey website was working. It was generally agreed that the forum has been very useful, is an excellent approach for facilitating the exchange of information and ideas, and is more efficient than an ongoing string of e-mail messages. Fourteen members are currently registered. One member commented that he was not receiving emails when posts were made. Bob Everett noted that the "watch this forum" button must be checked to receive automated emails.

**C. OEM Audit Website**

PQA announced that the website domain name has been secured at [www.oemaudit.com](http://www.oemaudit.com) but is still under development. PQA has contracted a professional website designer to develop the layout of the web pages. PQA has drafted the content of each page on the website and will email that information to committee members in the next few days for comment. PQA noted that the content pages that are sent out for comment would not reflect the banners and colors that will be incorporated on the final site. As of December 22<sup>nd</sup>, the website is expected to go live before January 1, 2005.

PQA recommended that the auditor application be available on the website, which would allow technicians to apply online. Applicants would receive an automated response from PQA stating that their application has been received and if selected, they would be notified by March 1, 2005. The committee agreed with this proposal.

EPA noted that a preliminary list of potential technician auditors had been compiled after the meeting in Las Vegas. PQA agreed to email the technicians on this list to let them know about the new website and to encourage them to fill out an auditor application. One member noted that listing the website address and project summary in his company's newsletter would help publicize the audit and added that these announcements are often picked up by the trade press as well. Given the potential problems and confusion that might result if potential auditors accessed the site before it was fully complete, the website address should not be made public until confirmation from PQA that the website is complete and functional. PQA noted that technicians could be notified through multiple sources if necessary.

#### **D. Overall Method for Conducting the Audit**

During the last meeting, four members agreed to revise certain segments of the draft audit questions. The AASP discussion forum was used to facilitate and consolidate comments on each segment. The suggested revisions were incorporated into a revised document. Discussion was based on this revised version of the questionnaire. A general discussion of the overall order of the segments resulted in the general agreement that segment 4 be moved to the beginning of the survey and all other segments renumbered accordingly.

##### Segment 1

Segment 1 was edited by Donnie Seyfer, who began the discussion by explaining his edits noting that he tried to simplify the language without losing the meaning of the survey questions. EPA asked for comments specifically from the committee's technicians and suggested that an introductory paragraph be added. Donnie Seyfer felt that an introduction might not be necessary for this segment. However, other members noted that introductory or descriptive language for each segment might be helpful, particularly for non-I/M technicians, and would limit any potential confusion that might discourage auditors from fully participating. It was generally agreed that introductory text would be added for each segment to describe why the questions were important and what information the committee hoped to gather. Donnie Seyfer agreed and stated that he would revise the segment accordingly.

To help improve technicians' understanding of the questions, one member suggested that an FAQ link be added at the end of each segment, which could define confusing terms as well as explain the importance of the survey. EPA liked the idea but felt it was necessary to first establish the questions and introductory text.

Segment 2

Segment 2 was also edited by Donnie Seyfer. He began the discussion by requesting clarification from EPA on the phrase "typical parameter" in question 2.1. EPA noted that the phrase was developed by CARB, but agreed that the question was confusing. Mark Warren noted that in PWR's survey of OEM websites, he was forced to use N/A for all of the questions in Segment 2. He noted that even though the criteria are in the regulation, the information is difficult to find on the OEM websites. EPA questioned the necessity of question 2.1, but one member noted the question was useful in some situations. EPA agreed to provide some clarification on this issue. Regarding question 2.2, it was generally agreed that the question should be divided into two parts in order to address the availability of mode 6 and whether it was helpful and/or usable.

Several members commented on the revisions to question 2.3. One member noted that technicians would be unable to make the comparison that the question required. EPA noted that manufacturers frequently rely on a third party for the parts to emission control systems, some of which develop repair manuals for these parts. EPA stated that technicians need links to the repair manuals. Some members felt that it was an OEM's responsibility to provide the repair information. However, EPA noted that the regulation requires links to third party sites but does not specify what the third party must provide. One member suggested that auditors be asked whether a link was available. However, another member noted that auditors would only look for the link if they knew the information was unavailable on the OEM website, and that care should be taken to ensure that the auditors are not requested to evaluate something they do not know exists.

It was generally agreed that the auditor could be requested to identify whether they are aware of any information currently not available on the site. One member felt this issue should be addressed in a two-part question: 1) were you seeking information that was unavailable, and 2) are you aware of information that was not made available? It was proposed that these two questions be added to Segment 3. John Cabaniss agreed to incorporate these questions into Segment 3. As a result, questions 2.4 and 2.5 become questions 2.3 and 2.4, respectively. On the issue of identifying missing information, members discussed whether technicians should have the opportunity to add open-ended comments. It was suggested that technicians be able to incorporate open-ended comments into the introductory text. These comments could provide the auditor with the ability to submit comments that are outside the scope of the questions presented and could address missing information as well as any positive attributes of the OEM website.

One member felt that system architects would have difficulty understanding question 2.4 and that it may be difficult to compile accurate data on this issue, particularly since it relates to the impact of a non-emissions module on an emissions-related module. Mark Warren noted that PWR's survey did not address multiplexing because the information is hard to ascertain. EPA noted that the question is based on the regulatory language. One member suggested the question be a two-part question that asks: 1) have

you experienced any issues with multiplexing; and 2) if so, was the information you required available? Donnie Seyfer agreed to modify this question accordingly.

Question 2.5 was not listed in the revised audit questionnaire but was listed in the discussion forum. Donnie Seyfer shared his revision with the committee. EPA noted that this question was included so that all emissions related issues that put the vehicle in failure mode would be addressed by the OEM. It was generally agreed that the question could be simplified to clarify whether the website explains why the failure light illuminates.

### Segment 3

Segment 3 was revised by John Cabaniss. The revisions were emailed prior to the meeting. Question 3.1 was summarized as a two-part question that addresses whether a website makes available a repair procedure or tool to complete the repair, and if not, whether the website identifies a source where the procedure can be found. One member noted that procedures were typically included in software, but others offered examples where the procedures were not provided. Some additional questions were added, one of which addressed reprogramming information. Some members felt that this question might not be necessary as part of the OEM audit. EPA noted that the question should address the usefulness of the information on the website, provided alternative means are necessary.

It was generally agreed that the issue of alternative means would be added as a separate general question. As a result, it was also agreed that the first two questions will address: 1) whether the information is available (i.e., reprogramming and re-initialization) and 2) whether the necessary tools (e.g., software and/or reprogramming procedures) are readily available and usable. Following these questions, a third question will request comment on the availability of alternatives if the necessary tools are unavailable or unusable. With respect to question 3.3 ("contact us" link), it was suggested that this question address both the response time and the type or usefulness of that response. John Cabaniss agreed to incorporate this change.

### Segment 4

Ron Turner edited Segment 4 (which will be moved up to be Segment 1) and noted that he only changed question 4.2, which he divided into 2 questions. There was some general discussion regarding the potential problems associated with the use of certain browsers or operating systems and how those issues could be incorporated into Segment 4. Several members felt auditors should be forewarned of potential problems in this regard. Otherwise website errors may be attributed to features other than the user's browser or operating system. One member felt strongly that specific browsers should be part of the minimum technology requirements of OEMs and that a browser question would be beneficial. EPA noted that the committee could recommend technicians use Internet Explorer, but this would not be a requirement for participation. Members generally supported the inclusion of a question addressing the browser options allowed by an OEM

website as well as a general recommendation in the overall instructions that Internet Explorer be used. It was generally agreed that technicians should identify their browser and operating system on the audit form, which would be helpful to the Steering Committee in evaluating the audit results in the context of potential problems associated with the incompatibility of certain browsers or operating systems.

With respect to question 4.4, members agreed that access to the website by auditors should be through a standard portal and registration process so that an accurate view of the site is provided to the auditor. EPA noted that this issue, and the issue of login time, should be sufficiently addressed in the question on how easy it is to connect. It was agreed that no further questions would be added on this issue at this time.

### Segment 5

EPA revised Segment 5 and several issues were discussed. Regarding question 5.3, it was agreed that this question should be kept simple and generic, and should simply request whether the user can download information or not. Issues of copying and/or sharing information (i.e., copyright information) is beyond the scope of this audit. One member felt that additional guidance on the website's printing features (Question 5.4) may be necessary because some websites request that the information be only printed (and not copied and/or distributed to other parties).

It was suggested that question 5.5 be rephrased to address simply whether the user could find the necessary information and the cost of this information. EPA will modify this question and will also add a question regarding how many documents the user purchases and whether they are too costly. This additional question will help put each response in perspective. It was generally agreed that question 5.6 is unnecessary and should be removed. With respect to the cost issue, it was also agreed that EPA will add some questions regarding whether the refund policy is clearly posted and whether the cost of obtaining information and/or documents is inhibiting the use of the site, particularly since a "reasonable" cost may differ between EPA and the various technicians performing the audit. These questions will be posted on the discussion forum for comment.

### **E. Next Steps**

Prior to the next meeting, committee members will continue to comment on the revised audit questions using the discussion forum. Any comments on the revised questions should be posted by January 10, 2005, which will allow for adequate time to compile a list of revised questions for the next meeting. The revisions made through the discussion forum will be discussed further during the next conference call on Thursday January 13, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

**F. Action Items**

- (1) Committee members will continue to comment on the audit questionnaire through the AASP's discussion forum. Bob Everett will update the questionnaire on the discussion forum to reflect the new segment order.
- (2) Donnie Seyfer, Ron Turner, John Cabaniss, and Holly Pugliese will revise sections of the audit questionnaire based on the conference call discussion. The revised questions will be posted on AASP's discussion forum as soon as possible. The committee will submit their comments on the revised questions by January 10, 2005 using the discussion forum.
- (3) The next conference call will be held on Thursday, January 13, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. EST. If a Steering Committee member is unable to attend, a proxy may be sent.