

TUV Staff Highlight



Rebecca joined TUV USA in February 2016 as the Food Safety Division's Project Manager. In March 2017, Rebecca was promoted to Marketing Manager for TUV USA, Inc.

She still continues to help the Food Safety Division writing Blogs and Social Media posting for TUV USA. You will see her at Food Safety Events including the SQF Conference in November.

Her professional experiences include Administrative Assistant, Office Management, Freelance Marketing, Event Planning and Accounting. She enjoys running 5k races, leading her Girl Scout Troop & Family Time.

[Rebecca Wright - LinkedIn](#)

How effective is your supplier approval program?

By Rebecca Wright and Lori Carlson

Of course your supplier approval program is effective; you have the scorecards to prove it! But, can your supplier approval program truly stand the test. Does it prevent food safety hazards from entering the food supply chain and reaching consumers? This month, TUV USA invites you to challenge your supplier approval program with our seven item questionnaire as we share with you auditor insights into the effectiveness of supplier approval programs.

1. Are supplier expectations clearly communicated?

Supplier expectation documents can assist in providing a clear dialog between the supplier and site. This may include requirements for supplying and updating approval documents, minimum operational and product requirements, corrective action expectations (including timeframe), and communication preferences.

2. Is material specification criteria based on risk?

Material specifications can be inherited and formulaic, describing attributes and limits for general use of the material. However, these may not provide protection against the detection of a food hazard if present, especially one that is identified as high-risk when used in the final product. Consideration for risk-based material specifications provides the site with effective criteria upon which to monitor materials.

3. Is the supplier approval list updated at a specified frequency and if so, is the frequency sufficient to accurately reflect supplier status?

The supplier approval list is a critical document of the food safety management system and used across departments for key decision making related to production. As suppliers may be qualified or disqualified based on purchasing needs and supplier monitoring, it is important that the supplier approval list reflects a supplier's status in real-time.

4. When suppliers are approved based on a questionnaire, what value does the information provide and does it inform food safety and quality decision making?

All aspects of a supplier approval program should be developed with the goal of gaining information to procure safe materials of a specified quality. Low-risk suppliers are frequently approved based solely on completion of a questionnaire and submission of the required approval documents. Therefore, questionnaires must be designed to ensure supplier or material risks are not overlooked and self-assessment addresses the expectations of the site. Equally important is the review of questionnaires by a qualified individual and follow-up on inaccurate or inconsistent information.

5. Is supplier ranking based on pre-defined criteria and are suppliers disqualified when they do not meet the minimum threshold?

Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) early on in the scorecarding process to ensure an objective and consistent approach. Criteria may consider activities such as recordkeeping compliance, on-time deliveries, lot acceptance, audit non-conformities, and corrective action completion. Scorecard results should be reviewed by a designated individual with responsibility for approving and disapproving suppliers; status updates should be made accordingly on the supplier approval list.

6. Does your recordkeeping system effectively maintain all current supplier documents?

Third-party audits often reveal outdated certificates or approval-based documents required of a site's supplier approval program. This is often discovered during a vertical audit where the auditor assesses program documents and records related to a production lot or batch.

7. Does the supplier approval and monitoring program have defined responsibilities?

Designated individuals (and their back-up) should be clearly identified in supplier procedures. Completing supplier approval and monitoring activities will require participation from multiple departments including Purchasing, Quality Assurance, Receiving, and Production. Due to the breadth of these activities, clearly defined roles will ensure completion and help prevent lapses in recordkeeping, monitoring and supplier follow-up.

How did you score? We'd like to hear. Share your experiences on what makes an effective supplier approval program. [Comments welcome here.](#)

About TUV USA, Inc.

TUV USA, Inc. is an ISO accredited certification body offering food safety certification against the BRC, SQF, FSSC 22000, IFS, and GLOBALG.A.P. standards. TUV USA, Inc. has experienced and highly competent auditors in all categories of the BRC Food Safety Standard and SQF Code and additionally certifies against the BRC Global Standards for Packaging and Packaging Materials, Storage and Distribution, Agents and Brokers, and Consumer Products. [Contact us](#) for more information about our

food safety services and FSMA training courses. Click [here](#) to subscribe to our monthly newsletter and view our past newsletters.

About the Author



Lori Carlson is an independent technical writer, trainer and consultant for the food and beverage industry with a background in food safety management systems, GFSI benchmarked schemes and regulatory compliance.