



What to Look for During Equipment Inspections

National Association of Dairy Regulators

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Plan Reviews Create Opportunity

Equipment Specified During Planning

Better equipment choices
Defensible standards
Proactive design review

VS

Equipment Already Installed

Violations after fact
Expensive fixes
Chronic compliance issues

This is where 3-A standards help.

What Are 3-A Standards?

Developed since the 1920s by:

MANUFACTURERS

Design & build
equipment

PROCESSORS

Use
the equipment

REGULATORS

Enforce
standards

Nearly 1,000 certified equipment records

80+ standards across all food processing sectors

Recognized by PMO, FDA, USDA, and state regulatory agencies

Practical Tool: Sample RFP Language

Sample Language for Equipment RFPs:

"All product-contact surfaces shall be designed, fabricated, and installed to comply with applicable 3-A Sanitary Standards. Bidder shall provide valid 3-A certificate numbers for all equipment proposed, verifiable through the 3-A SSI certificate database at www.3-a.org/certificates."

Why This Works:

- Objective, verifiable compliance criteria
- Processors can share directly in procurement process
- Gives regulators defensible reference during plan reviews

Three Critical Inspection Questions

1



Surface Finish

2



Drainage

3



Accessibility

No profilometers. No specialized equipment.
Just your inspection experience and field knowledge.

Surface Finish: What to Look For

3-A Standard Requirement: Product contact surfaces must be 32 Ra or better (microinch roughness average)

Visual Red Flags:

- Weld discoloration (heat tinting) = improper post-weld treatment
- Visible grinding marks or machining lines = exceeds Ra limits
- Texture you can feel with fingernail = almost certainly above 32 Ra
- Inconsistent appearance between panels = quality control issue

Drainage: What to Look For

3-A Standard Minimum

Horizontal piping slope $1/8$ " per foot | Tank slope $3/4$ " per foot

Field Testing Technique: Pour water from a bottle on the surface.
Watch where it goes. If it pools, flag it.

Visual Red Flags:

- Flat areas where water pools (even briefly)
- Horizontal pipe runs with no visible downward angle
- Tank outlet NOT at the visibly lowest point
- Standing water AFTER CIP cycle = drainage failure

Accessibility: What to Look For

Field Testing Technique:

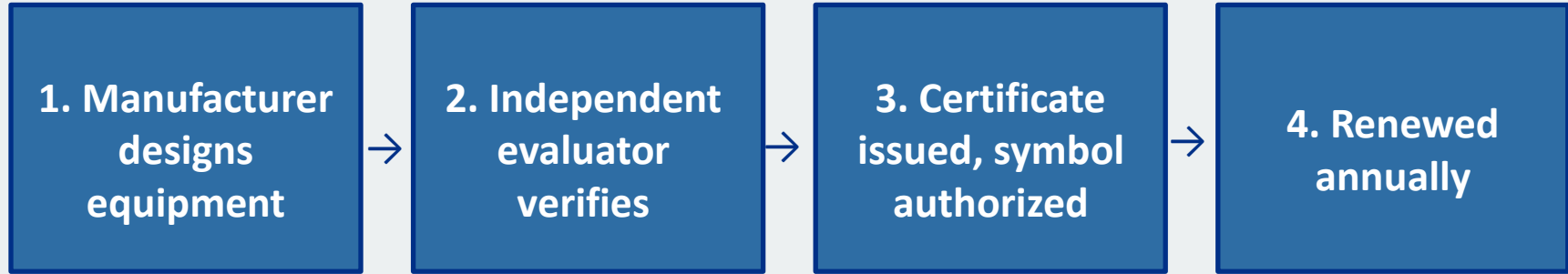
Ask the operator 'Show me how you clean this surface.'

If the answer requires specialized training, tools, or complex procedures = red flag.

Visual Red Flags:

- Corners you cannot photograph = corners you cannot inspect
- Disassembly requires tools beyond brush and CIP spray = problem
- Inaccessible dead spaces or cavities (crevices, tight corners)
- Areas requiring >3 disassembly steps to access = not practical

How Equipment Earns the 3-A Symbol



Key Point: This is NOT self-certification

The manufacturer cannot evaluate their own equipment. An independent third party verifies compliance.

Who Are Certified Conformance Evaluators (CCEs)?

Independent Organizations

CCEs are not 3-A SSI employees. They are independent engineering consultancies, testing labs, and hygienic design specialists.

Trained & Audited

Each CCE is trained on 3-A standards, certification requirements, and verification protocols. 3-A SSI audits them regularly.

Field Experience

Many CCEs are former state regulators. They understand field inspection realities. Some of you might become CCEs after your regulatory careers.

What This Means For You:

When you see the 3-A symbol on equipment, you can trust it represents actual third-party verification, not manufacturer self-certification.

Certificate Database: Verify in Real-Time

Search by:

- Company Name
- Certificate Number
- Standard Number



Scan the QR Code

[Sneak Peek](#)

Database as an Inspection Tool

Scenario: During a plan review...

1. Processor says: 'We're buying equipment from Company X'
2. You search: 3-a.org/certificates for 'Company X'
3. You verify: Is this equipment model certified? Is certificate current?
4. Outcome: You have instant verification, in real-time, on your phone

What If You Find Issues:

- Equipment NOT in database but claims 3-A symbol = documentation issue to cite
- Certificate is EXPIRED = authorization lapsed; symbol use is unauthorized
- Model number doesn't match certificate = this configuration isn't certified

Why Your Voice Matters

WITHOUT REGULATORS

- Only manufacturers & processors
- Standards become theoretical
- No field reality check
- Less enforceable
- Regulators must work around standards

WITH REGULATORS

- Balanced representation
- Standards grounded in field reality
- Practical enforcement criteria
- Defensible and consistent
- Regulators enforce standards they helped write

Using Standards During Plan Reviews

You have influence.
When you reference 3-A standards during a plan review or consultation, processors listen.

Not as an advisor. Not as a consultant.

But as a regulator pointing to a defensible, nationally-recognized standard.

A Market Signal

When regulators reference 3-A standards in plan reviews → Processors start asking vendors for certified equipment → Vendors begin offering 3-A certified options → Market demand shifts

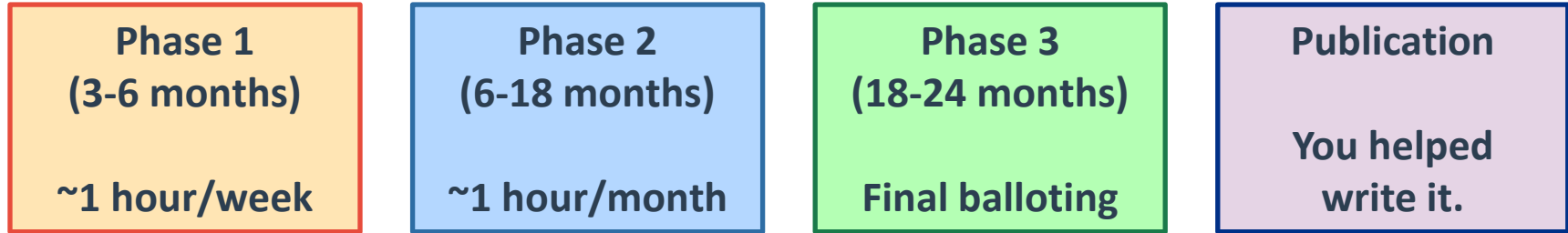


Help Shape Equipment Standards

**You're Invited to Help Write the Standards
You'll Enforce**



What to Expect



What You Get

- ✓ Listed on 3-A SSI website as a standards working group member
- ✓ Certificate of service
- ✓ Influence on standards YOUR colleagues will cite for a decade
- ✓ Network with regulators, manufacturers, and industry leaders

Five Projects Just Starting

Standards Revisions Launching in Coming Months

	Silo-Type Storage Tanks	Bulk storage equipment for dairy
	Batch Processors & Kettles	Pasteurizers, vats, heat-exchange
	Mechanical Conveyors	Dry product handling and transport
	Disc-Type Valves	Control and isolation equipment
	Air-Under-Pressure Systems	Pneumatic controls and instrumentation

Apply at: 3-A.org

Next Steps

Three Ways to Stay Connected

1

**Standard
Development
Working Groups**

2

**Use the 3-A
Certificate
Database**

3

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Thank you for the work you do every day keeping our food supply safe.

