

# Stock Image Usage

## *What are Stock Images?*

A stock image is defined as a generic, previously used, or an image from a report unrelated to the one being audited, with the intention to mislead the Quality Assurance Auditor (QAA).

## *What happens if you're suspected of using stock images?*

All of our QAAs undertake checks to ensure that the photographic evidence was taken on the same date as the assessment being audited. Images provided must have a date stamp within the image, as well as retaining the original metadata produced when the image is created. If the auditor has any concerns, these are passed to the QA Department for investigation.

## *What does a stock image investigation include?*

If suspected of stock image use, the QA Manager will suspend your accreditation and being investigating the circumstances relating to the matter. They will also review all photographic evidence submitted for audit from the preceding two years. An EA will also need to provide a written response to the allegation, as well as a formal telephone interview with the QA Manager to discuss the particulars of the investigation.

## *What courses of action are there?*

If the use of stock images is not intended to mislead – for example, uploading the wrong evidence pack for a report – the EA will be placed under heightened QA, ensuring that all audits for the next year look closely at whether the stock images had been used.

If it is determined that the use of stock images *was* intended to mislead, the EAs membership will be revoked, or in other words, they will be 'struck off'. As per DCLG guidance, an EA being found to have used stock images will be **permanently barred** from reapplying to become an Energy Assessor with any accreditation scheme, unless they are able to successfully appeal against this using the Scheme's appeal mechanisms.

## *Why do you take this so seriously?*

The use of stock images is a serious breach of the EA code of conduct, and as such, has the most severe sanction associated with it. DCLG are of the view that if an EA has previously used stock images to mislead, they should no longer be able to work as an energy assessor again. This protects the integrity of the industry, and the EPC customer themselves.