

AU Section 341

The Auditor's Consideration of an Entity's Ability to Continue as a Going Concern

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(Supersedes section 340)

Source: SAS No. 59; SAS No. 64; SAS No. 77; SAS No. 96.

See [section 9341](#) for interpretations of this section.

Effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after January 1, 1989, unless otherwise indicated.

.01

This section provides guidance to the auditor in conducting an audit of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards with respect to evaluating whether there is substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. [fn 1fn 2](#) Continuation of an entity as a going concern is assumed in financial reporting in the absence of significant information to the contrary. Ordinarily, information that significantly contradicts the going concern assumption relates to the entity's inability to continue to meet its obligations as they become due without substantial disposition of assets outside the ordinary course of business, restructuring of debt, externally forced revisions of its operations, or similar actions.

THE AUDITOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

.02

[The following paragraph is effective for audits of fiscal years beginning on or after December 15, 2010. See [PCAOB Release No. 2010-004](#). For audits of fiscal years beginning before December 15, 2010, [click here](#).]

The auditor has a responsibility to evaluate whether there is substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time, not to exceed one year beyond the date of the financial statements being audited (hereinafter referred to as a reasonable period of time). The auditor's evaluation is based on his or her knowledge of relevant conditions and events that exist at or have occurred prior to the date of the auditor's report. Information about such conditions or events is obtained from the application of auditing procedures planned and

- Reading of minutes of meetings of stockholders, board of directors, and important committees of the board
- Inquiry of an entity's legal counsel about litigation, claims, and assessments
- Confirmation with related and third parties of the details of arrangements to provide or maintain financial support

CONSIDERATION OF CONDITIONS AND EVENTS

.06

In performing audit procedures such as those presented in paragraph .05, the auditor may identify information about certain conditions or events that, when considered in the aggregate, indicate there could be substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time. The significance of such conditions and events will depend on the circumstances, and some may have significance only when viewed in conjunction with others. The following are examples of such conditions and events:

- Negative trends—for example, recurring operating losses, working capital deficiencies, negative cash flows from operating activities, adverse key financial ratios
- Other indications of possible financial difficulties—for example, default on loan or similar agreements, arrearages in dividends, denial of usual trade credit from suppliers, restructuring of debt, noncompliance with statutory capital requirements, need to seek new sources or methods of financing or to dispose of substantial assets
- Internal matters—for example, work stoppages or other labor difficulties, substantial dependence on the success of a particular project, uneconomic long-term commitments, need to significantly revise operations
- External matters that have occurred—for example, legal proceedings, legislation, or similar matters that might jeopardize an entity's ability to operate; loss of a key franchise, license, or patent; loss of a principal customer or supplier; uninsured or underinsured catastrophe such as a drought, earthquake, or flood

CONSIDERATION OF MANAGEMENT'S PLANS

.07

If, after considering the identified conditions and events in the aggregate, the auditor believes there is substantial doubt about the ability of the entity to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time, he should consider management's plans for dealing with the adverse effects of the conditions and events. The auditor should obtain information about the plans and consider whether it is likely the adverse effects will be mitigated for a reasonable period of time and that such plans can be effectively implemented. The auditor's considerations relating to management plans may include the following:

- Plans to dispose of assets
 - Restrictions on disposal of assets, such as covenants limiting such transactions in loan or similar agreements or encumbrances against assets
 - Apparent marketability of assets that management plans to sell

The accompanying financial statements have been prepared assuming that the Company will continue as a going concern. As discussed in Note X to the financial statements, the Company has suffered recurring losses from operations and has a net capital deficiency that raise substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern. Management's plans in regard to these matters are also described in Note X. The financial statements do not include any adjustments that might result from the outcome of this uncertainty.

[As amended, effective for reports issued after December 31, 1990, by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 64.]

.14

If the auditor concludes that the entity's disclosures with respect to the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time are inadequate, a departure from generally accepted accounting principles exists. This may result in either a qualified (except for) or an adverse opinion. Reporting guidance for such situations is provided in section 508, Reports on Audited Financial Statements.

.15

Substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time that arose in the current period does not imply that a basis for such doubt existed in the prior period and, therefore, should not affect the auditor's report on the financial statements of the prior period that are presented on a comparative basis. When financial statements of one or more prior periods are presented on a comparative basis with financial statements of the current period, reporting guidance is provided in section 508.

.16

If substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time existed at the date of prior period financial statements that are presented on a comparative basis, and that doubt has been removed in the current period, the explanatory paragraph included in the auditor's report (following the opinion paragraph) on the financial statements of the prior period should not be repeated.

DOCUMENTATION

.17

As stated in paragraph .03 of this section, the auditor considers whether the results of the auditing procedures performed in planning, gathering evidential matter relative to the various audit objectives, and completing the audit identify conditions and events that, when considered in the aggregate, indicate there could be substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time. If, after considering the identified conditions and events in the aggregate, the auditor believes there is substantial doubt about the ability of the entity to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time, he or she follows the guidance in paragraphs .07 through .16. In connection with that guidance, the auditor should document all of the following:

- a.* The conditions or events that led him or her to believe that there is substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.
- b.* The elements of management's plans that the auditor considered to be particularly significant to overcoming the adverse effects of the conditions or events.

- c. The auditing procedures performed and evidence obtained to evaluate the significant elements of management's plans.
- d. The auditor's conclusion as to whether substantial doubt about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time remains or is alleviated. If substantial doubt remains, the auditor also should document the possible effects of the conditions or events on the financial statements and the adequacy of the related disclosures. If substantial doubt is alleviated, the auditor also should document the conclusion as to the need for disclosure of the principal conditions and events that initially caused him or her to believe there was substantial doubt.
- e. The auditor's conclusion as to whether he or she should include an explanatory paragraph in the audit report. If disclosures with respect to an entity's ability to continue as a going concern are inadequate, the auditor also should document the conclusion as to whether to express a qualified or adverse opinion for the resultant departure from generally accepted accounting principles.

[Paragraph added, effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after May 15, 2002, by Statement on Auditing Standards No. 96.]

[The following heading is effective for audits of fiscal years beginning on or after December 15, 2012. See [PCAOB Release No. 2012-004](#).]

COMMUNICATIONS WITH AUDIT COMMITTEES

.17A

[The following paragraph is effective for audits of fiscal years beginning on or after December 15, 2012. See [PCAOB Release No. 2012-004](#).]

Paragraph 17 of Auditing Standard No. 16, Communications with Audit Committees, describes matters an auditor is required to communicate to the audit committee related to the auditor's evaluation of a company's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

EFFECTIVE DATE

.18

This section is effective for audits of financial statements for periods beginning on or after January 1, 1989. Early application of the provisions of this section is permissible. [Paragraph renumbered by the issuance of Statement on Auditing Standards No. 96, January 2002.]

Footnotes (AU Section 341 – The Auditor's Consideration of an Entity's Ability to Continue as a Going Concern):

[fn 1](#) This section does not apply to an audit of financial statements based on the assumption of liquidation (for example, when [a] an entity is in the process of liquidation, [b] the owners have decided to commence dissolution or liquidation, or [c] legal proceedings, including bankruptcy, have reached a point at which dissolution or liquidation is probable). See Auditing Interpretation, "Reporting on Financial Statements Prepared on a Liquidation Basis of Accounting" (section 9508.33-.38).

[fn 2](#) The guidance provided in this section applies to audits of financial statements prepared either in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or in accordance with a comprehensive basis of accounting other than generally accepted accounting principles. References in this section to generally accepted accounting principles are intended to include a comprehensive basis of accounting other than generally accepted accounting principles (excluding liquidation basis).