



Isn't that special! Implementation of new special inspections component of the 2008 Building Code

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Currently there is great confusion in the industry over the game plan for the implementation of the new special inspections component of the 2008 Building Code.

The new proposed inspections rule 101-06 (based upon the current International Building Code) elevates the qualifications of the inspection requirements and the protocols associated with the Special Inspection categories.

No longer is a "licensed" professional signing a TR-1 form the single satisfactory requirement. Inspectors that perform inspection under the direction of the "primary" (a PE) must have specific experience or certifications (ICC, NICET, etc.) to perform inspections. In some cases "(steel, welding, bolting) even the PE must carry a certification in addition to his license.

Also a firm or "special inspection agency" must garner IAS certification that "match" and correlate to the TR-1 special inspection categories to perform such inspections. These IAS certifications, performed and issued by the International Accreditation Society are time consuming and rigorous; requiring field visits by the IAS certification team. Not only do they require a technical inspection protocol compliance; but also require a 3rd party review and rigorous training, quality control and paperwork production.

As it is, the requesting agency is responsible to pay the costs of the IAS team and such an effort could approach \$30,000 in cost.

In addition to the inspectoral component of the TR-1 work there are numerous "lab" requirements or tests that may be required.

Of course the granddaddy of these tests is concrete (which not only requires an ACI but AASHTO review as well as a NYC DOB license.)

For soils, troxler compaction would be required as well as a sieve analysis. Welding might require UT Non Destructive Testing.

These tests can be quite expensive and involve equipment that requires substantial technology and a certified operator thus increasing the cost significantly to the client. In some cases, the design professional will "spec" tests in excess of the base code requirement.

Add to these new initiatives some "confusion" in regard to the Building Department's direction on some of the issues. Some things that need clarification are;

* Although the 2008 code seems to reference IAS and ICC parameters, DOB has expressed an opinion that they may not want to effectuate these protocol and requirements.

* Through the public comment process, smaller design professionals complained that such requirements will prevent them from being able to inspect themselves thus making smaller jobs inspections cost prohibitive. In response, the DOB is currently developing different requirements for different size jobs.

* There is confusion over the requirement of the special inspector (the TR-1 professional) to work for the owner. In some cases the DOB is interpreting this to mean the testing lab (TR-2/TR-3, not TR-1) must work for the owner. This policy doesn't seem to conform to the appropriate section of the law.

* There are still no plans or time frame for the registration or the requirements of a special inspection agency program; although it has not yet been defined it seems it will require a direction much akin to the current lab protocols and structure.

As the direction gets clearer on the issue, there is one absolute- although the professionalization and codification of the private inspection function is a good thing, it will directly affect the cost of the service- in most cases doubling it- as the qualified inspectors will command a greater compensation. This is a small price to pay for a better product that can easily be used by the owner to ensure he's getting what he bought and have a 3rd party set of eyes providing them with invaluable quality information on a real time basis.

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