
Specifications Overview

Design Manual
Chapter 1
General Information

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Specifications are detailed statements describing materials, dimensions, and quality of work for something to be built, installed, or manufactured. At the Iowa DOT, the Specifications Section of the Statewide Operations Bureau oversees all specifications. Additionally, all changes to the specifications (with the exception of Special Provisions) are decided by the Specification Committee (spec committee). This committee consists of representatives from the FHWA, local governments, and various offices within the DOT.

Requests for specification changes (with the exception of Special Provisions) must be submitted to the spec committee by a current member. The Office of Design's representative to the spec committee is the Design Engineer, but these duties have been delegated to the Methods Engineer. Therefore, members of the Office of Design should contact the Methods Engineer with any proposed specification changes.

Listed below are the types of specifications used at the Iowa DOT. The specifications are listed in decreasing order of precedence, shifting from general in nature to more project-specific. For example, a requirement in a Developmental Specification would override a similar requirement in a Supplemental Specification; and a related requirement in a Special Provision would override them both. Typically, Special Provisions are written to address issues on specific projects, whereas the other types of specifications become increasingly generic as you move up the list. For a complete listing of the hierarchy for all contract documents, refer to Article 1105.04 of the Standard Specifications.

Standard Specifications (spec book)

The Standard Specifications are published in book form approximately every 5 years. The current publication is Iowa Department of Transportation Standard Specifications for Highway and Bridge Construction, Series 2001. Between printings, the spec book is updated through the issuance of General Supplemental Specifications.

General Supplemental Specifications (GS)

GSs are 8½" x 11" bound booklets containing revisions to the spec book. GSs are released twice a year to coincide with the April and October bid lettings. Each new GS replaces the previous one, and incorporates the changes from all previous GSs. Therefore, a designer needs only refer to the newest GS in order to find the most accurate information.

A searchable version of the spec book, with all its GS updates incorporated, is also available in the Electronic Reference Library (ERL), located online at <http://www.erl.dot.state.ia.us>.

Supplemental Specifications (SS)

SSs are specifications that either: modify the requirements for work already covered in the spec book, or describe the requirements for work not covered in the spec book. SSs are linked to specific bid item numbers, and the Office of Contracts automatically assigns an SS to a project when one of that project's bid items calls for it. Frequently-used SSs may be incorporated into the spec book at its next printing.

Developmental Specifications (DS)

DSs are a hybrid of Supplemental Specifications and Special Provisions. They are reusable, but will be assigned to specific projects. If a DS is modified, it will be assigned a new number. About half of the available DSs require the approval of a controller before they can be assigned for use on a project. When a DS is required on a particular project, the designer should follow the procedures outlined in Section 1C-4.

Special Provisions (SP)

SPs are specifications for work items applicable to only a specific project or group of projects. SPs are written by the designer and submitted to the Specifications Section as outlined in Section 1C-5. SPs are the only type of specifications that do not require approval by the spec committee, and they are the only type of specifications that override any information shown in the plans.