
Specifications Overview

Design Manual
Chapter 120
Specifications

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Specifications are detailed statements describing materials, dimensions, and quality of work for something to be constructed, installed, or manufactured. At the Iowa DOT, the Specifications Section of the Contracts and Specifications Bureau manages the specification development process. Additionally, all changes to the specifications (exception for Special Provisions) are decided by the [Specification Committee](#) (or Spec. Committee). This committee consists of representatives from FHWA, local governments, and various bureaus within the Highway Division within the DOT. For more information on the Specification Committee, refer to PPM 600.02.

Requests for specification changes (except for Special Provisions) must be submitted to the Specifications Committee by a current member. The Design Bureau's representative is the [Methods Engineer](#).

Below are the types of specifications used at the Iowa DOT listed in an increasing order of precedence, shifting from general in nature to more project specific:

- [Standard Specifications](#)
- [General Supplemental Specifications](#)
- [Supplemental Specifications](#)
- [Developmental Specifications](#)
- [Special Provisions](#)

As an example, a requirement in a Developmental Specification would override a similar requirement in a General Supplemental Specification, whereas a related requirement in a Special Provision would override them both.

For a complete listing of the hierarchy for all contract documents, refer to [Article 1105.04](#) of the Standard Specifications.

Standard Specifications

The [Standard Specifications](#) are published in book form. The Specifications Section determines when a new book is published. Between printings, the spec book is updated through the issuance of General Supplemental Specifications.

General Supplemental Specifications (GS)

[General Supplemental Specifications](#) are published twice each 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, designers need only refer to the newest GS in order to find the most accurate information.

Supplemental Specifications (SS)

[Supplemental Specifications](#) are specifications that either modify the requirements for work covered in the Standard Specifications or describe requirements for work not covered by the Standard Specifications. SSs are typically linked to specific bid items. The Contracts and Specifications Bureau automatically assigns an SS to a project when those specific bid items are included.

Developmental Specifications (DS)

[Developmental Specifications](#) are a hybrid of SSs and SPs. They are reusable, but will be assigned to specific projects. If a DS is modified, it will be assigned a new number. Most DSs require the approval of a controller before they can be assigned to a project. When a DS is required on a project, follow the procedures outlined in Section [120A-2](#).

Special Provisions (SP)

[Special Provisions](#) are specifications for work items applicable to a specific project or group of projects. SPs are typically written by designers and submitted to the Specifications Section as outlined in Section [120A-3](#). Some SPs are drafted by the Specifications Section. SPs override information shown in the plans.

Chronology of Changes to Design Manual Section:

120A-001 Specifications Overview

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| 3/4/2021 | Changed Office of Contracts to Contracts and Specifications Bureau. Rerouted the Standard Specifications and General Supplemental Specifications links to the Specifications home page. Added links to the Specifications home page for Supplemental Specifications, Developmental Specifications, and Special Provisions. |
| 6/25/2019 | Revised
Updated hyperlinks.
Updated header logo and text. |
| 6/12/2018 | Revised
Corrected header and fixed broken hyperlinks. |
| 2/10/2012 | Revised
Added hyperlink to Methods Engineer. Added that some SPs are drafted by the Specifications Section. Removed that SPs do not require approval by the spec committee. |
| 7/12/2010 | Revised
Updated hyperlinks. |