

## PROCEDURE: PROJECT CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Division of the State Architect (DSA) documents referenced within this publication are available on the [DSA Forms](#) or [DSA Publications](#) webpages.

**PURPOSE:** California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24, Part 1, Chapter 4, Article 1 (Sections 4-211 through 4-220) and Group 1, Articles 5 and 6 (Sections 4-331 through 4-344) provide regulations governing the construction process for projects under the jurisdiction of DSA.

This Procedure provides a required, prescribed method for compliance with applicable sections of the above regulations related to certification of construction projects.

**BACKGROUND:** Constructed projects regulated by DSA are required to be certified as to the safety of design and construction pursuant to Education Code Sections 17280-17316 and 81130-81147.

Ensuring projects are certified is critical because:

- Certification provides a method to report the safety of school construction.
- School board members may be personally liable for projects until certified.
- DSA will be unable to approve new proposed projects associated with uncertified construction (see *DSA IR A-20: New Projects Associated with Existing Uncertified Projects* for in-depth discussion).

**DEFINITIONS:** The following definitions apply to terms used in this document:

**Architect/Engineer** – An abbreviated use of the term Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.

**Contractor** – A company or individual that contracts for or is otherwise responsible for the construction of the project or portions of the project.

**DSA Approved Construction Documents** – Portions of plans, specifications, addenda, deferred submittals, revisions, and construction change documents (CCDs) duly approved by DSA that contain information related to, and affecting Structural Safety, Fire and Life Safety, and Accessibility. While all portions of the construction documents may contain a DSA identification stamp, the stamp does not imply approval. The DSA approval is indicated by a letter to the district. The letter clarifies that the approval is limited to Structural Safety, Fire and Life Safety, and Accessibility.

The DSA approval letter states: *“Buildings constructed in accordance with approved drawings and specifications will meet minimum required standard given in Title 24, California Code of Regulations, for structural, and fire and life safety...and... certifies that the drawings and specifications are in compliance with State regulations for the reasonable accommodation of the disabled.”*

**Design Professional in General Responsible Charge** – The architect or engineer in general responsible charge of the project, as listed on Line 22 or 24 of form DSA 1.

**Other Responsible Design Professionals** – Architects or engineers with delegated responsibility for portions of the project as listed on Line 25 or 26 of form DSA 1, such as architects, structural engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers and the geotechnical engineer of record.

**Project Inspector** – An inspector who is certified by DSA and specifically approved by DSA to provide competent, adequate and continuous construction inspections for the project.



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- DSAbbox.com is a web-based file sharing system used by those involved in the construction process to submit and share required documentation with DSA.
- See DSA PR 13-01 and DSAbbox External Library for further discussion.

### 1.4 DSA issues Inspection Cards (forms DSA 152):

The form DSA 152 is an interim verified report by the project inspector. The project inspector signs off the applicable blocks and sections on the form as the work progresses, verifying:

- Construction is in compliance with the DSA-approved construction documents.
- Required testing and inspections are complete.
- Required documentation has been received by the project inspector.

### 1.5 Construction Commences:

- As construction proceeds, various documents are submitted to the DSAbbox by those involved with the construction process.
- The DSA field engineer (District Structural Engineer) is generally responsible for regulatory oversight of the construction and visits the construction site when appropriate.

### 1.6 Project Certification Phase is Initiated:

- See Section 2 for in-depth discussion about the process of Project Certification.
- When a project becomes occupied, in use, or otherwise complete, DSA initiates the project certification phase. The project either becomes “certified” or “not certified.”
- The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge and the district (owner) are notified of the certification status of the project.
- If the project is certified, DSA creates a certification letter which is uploaded to the DSAbbox and sent to the school district (owner) and the Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- If the project is not certified, then:
  - DSA completes form DSA 301-N which identifies the reasons certification is being withheld. The form is uploaded to the DSAbbox, and sent to the district (owner). If the reasons for withholding certification are not resolved within 60 calendar days, form 301-N is updated by using form 301-P and the form 301-P is then posted on the DSA website using the DSA Certification Box.
  - After DSA posts a form DSA 301-P, the district and its design team can upload the identified required documentation to the DSA Certification Box and/or upload forms DSA 302 with responses to the issues identified in the form DSA 301-P.
  - After the district and its design team has resolved all the issues identified in the form DSA 301-P, a request for DSA to re-examine the file must be made by submitting a completed form DSA 302.
  - A fee may be required to initiate the re-examination process as specified in section 2.9.

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### 2. PROJECT CERTIFICATION PHASE:

#### General:

Constructed school building projects are required to be certified for compliance with Title 24, California Code of Regulations as to the safety of design and construction. The project certification phase is the culmination of the DSA construction oversight program wherein DSA completes the verification that the constructed project complies with the DSA-approved construction documents.

#### 2.1 Initiation of the Project Certification Phase:

- For the purpose of initiating the project certification phase, the following definitions shall apply:
  - **Occupied or in Use** – Buildings, structures, projects or portions of projects in the state of being entered or used by any persons or for any purposes other than for the purpose of being constructed or furnished.
  - **Ready for Occupancy or Use** – Projects that have all the Structural, Fire and Life Safety, and Accessibility components and systems completed such that the project can be occupied or used.

**2.1.1** The project certification phase is initiated by the DSA District Structural Engineer (DSE) when one of the following conditions occurs:

- a) **The project is occupied or in use.** In clarification, the project certification phase will be initiated as follows:
  - For projects consisting of one building or structure: Once that building or structure becomes occupied or in use (even if related structural, fire and life safety, or accessibility portions of the building or associated site work are not complete).
  - For projects consisting of multiple buildings or structures: Once all the buildings or structures become occupied or in use (even if related structural, fire and life safety, or accessibility portions of the building or associated site work are not complete).
  - For projects with only site work (no structures): Once the fire and life safety or accessibility portions of the site work are in use.
- b) **The project is ready for occupancy or use.** In clarification, the project certification phase will be initiated as follows:
  - For projects consisting of one building or structure: Once that building or structure becomes ready to occupy or use and the structural, fire and life safety, and accessibility portions of the associated site work are ready for use.
  - For projects consisting of multiple buildings or structures: Once all the buildings or structures become ready to occupy or use and the structural, fire and life safety, and accessibility portions of the associated site work are ready for use.
  - For projects with only site work (no structures): Once the fire and life safety, and accessibility portions of the site work are ready for use.
- c) **Construction activity has been suspended or abandoned for a period of one year.** If construction activity is suspended or abandoned for a period of one year, the DSA approval of the unconstructed portion of the project may be voided (unless the

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unconstructed portion is required to be in place for the constructed work to be code compliant) and the certification requirements for the constructed portion are reviewed and identified.

### 2.2 Examination of the DSA Project File for Certification:

DSA staff examines the project file to verify that requirements for project certification have been met. Using the documents found in the DSAbox, the project file, ADM, and data entered into eTracker, the DSA staff verifies the following:

**2.2.1 Final Verified Reports:** Final Verified Reports as listed in section 2.3 are required to have been received, correctly completed, and signed by the correct persons.

**2.2.2 Construction Documents:** Construction documents and changes to the construction documents which modify or affect the structural, fire and life safety, or accessibility components of the project must have been approved by DSA. These include:

- Addenda
- Revisions
- Deferred Submittals
- Category A Construction Change Documents (CCD Category A)

**2.2.3 Construction of Required Scope:** All systems and components as defined in the DSA-approved construction documents which affect structural, fire and life safety, and accessibility must have been constructed.

**2.2.4 Construction Compliance:** All systems and components of the structural, fire and life safety, and accessibility scope of the work must have been constructed in compliance with the DSA-approved construction documents.

**2.2.5 Required Fees:** All required fees must have been paid. DSA staff performs a final reconciliation to confirm that all fees required by regulation have been paid to DSA. The final fee reconciliation cannot be completed until:

- All Construction Documents have been approved.
- The District completes and submits a form *DSA 168: Statement of Final Actual Project Cost*.

**2.2.6 Notice of Completion:** A Notice of Completion is required to be received by DSA. For the purposes of certification, the DSA 168 also serves as the notice of completion.

### 2.3 Documents Required for Certification:

The two sub-sections below provide a comprehensive list of documents required to be submitted to DSA for the purposes of certification. DSA staff reviews these documents to verify they are complete, correct and signed by the appropriate person. Additionally, DSA staff reviews these documents as part of the verifications identified in section 2.2. *Note: for purposes of certification, the final verified reports cover and govern over any missing, incorrect, incomplete or non-conforming interim verified reports as well as interim verified reports reporting non-conforming/non-compliant conditions.*

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**2.3.1** The following documents are required to be submitted to DSA for all projects:

- Form DSA 6-AE **(Final)**
- Form DSA 6-PI **(Final)**
- Form DSA 6-C **(Final)**
- Form DSA 168

**2.3.2** The following documents are required to be submitted to DSA only for those projects for which they are applicable as defined:

- For projects with material testing required: form DSA 291 **(Final)**.
- For projects with special inspections required *and* the special inspectors are provided by the Laboratory of Record: Form DSA 291 **(Final)**. Section 2 “Combined Verified Report” checkbox is checked and the report is signed by the Engineering Manager of the approved Testing and Inspection Laboratory.
- For projects with special inspections required *and* the special inspectors are employed directly by the school district (not provided by the Laboratory of Record): Form DSA 292 **(Final)**. Each special inspector must sign and submit individual Verified Reports.
- For projects that require geotechnical-related testing or inspections: Form DSA 293 **(Final)**.
- For projects with manufactured bleachers when the overall height is 20 feet or less: Form DSA 130.

### **2.4 DSA Issues a Notification of the Status of Project Certification:**

After DSA staff completes the examination of the file (see Section 2.2) and verifies the required documents are received and correct (see Section 2.3), then a notification of the status of certification is generated and issued. The Notification will be issued 60 days after the date that causes initiation of the project certification phase.

- For projects that can be certified: DSA will generate and issue a “*Certification of Compliance*” letter. The certification letter is then uploaded to the DSAbbox and ADM and copies are sent to the following:
  - The school district (owner) “Attention District Superintendent” and “Attention Director of Facilities.”
  - The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- For projects that cannot be certified: DSA will generate and issue a form DSA 301-N. The form is then uploaded to DSAbbox and a copy is sent to the school district (owner) “Attention Director of Facilities.”  
The District and its design/construction team will then have 60 days to resolve all outstanding issues. After the 60-day period, the file is again examined and actions are taken as described in section 2.5.

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### 2.5 60 Day Examination of the Certification Status for Non-Certified Projects.

**2.5.1** After 60 days from the issue date of the form DSA 301-N, DSA staff will again examine the project file as described in section 2.2 to determine if all requirements for certification have been resolved.

**2.5.2** If the project can be certified, DSA will:

- Issue the “Certification of Compliance” letter, as described in Section 2.4.-+

**2.5.3** If the project still cannot be certified, then DSA will:

- Generate a form DSA 301-P. This form is simply an update to form DSA 301-N such that the posted issues reflect the actual state of certification after the 60-day notification period.
- Upload the form DSA 301-P to DSAbbox. Project collaborators will receive automatic notification and be able to view all project documents; however, permissions to upload documents to the project folders will be terminated at this time since subsequent certification actions will take place in DSA Certification Box.
- Send copies of the form DSA 301-P to the following:
  - The school district (owner) “Attention District Superintendent” and “Attention Director of Facilities.”
  - The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- Post the form DSA 301-P to the DSA website via DSA Certification Box as described in Section 2.6. This notification is viewable by the public.

### 2.6 Posting the Form DSA 301-P: Notification of Requirement for Certification to DSA Certification Box

After 60 calendar days have elapsed from the date form DSA 301-N was issued, DSA staff posts form DSA 301-P to DSA Certification Box. This posted notice is viewable by the public.

When a project becomes certified, the form DSA 301-P is removed from the DSA website posting.

### 2.7 Re-examination for Non-Certified Projects with Form DSA 301-P Posted to DSA Certification Box

Once a DSA 301-P has been posted in DSA Certification Box, project stakeholders will no longer be able to upload documents to their folders in the original project DSAbbox. Instead, documents required for certification need to be uploaded by the district/design/construction team to the DSA Certification Box.

**2.7.1** Responding to issues identified in form DSA 301-P occurs as follows:

- The School District (Owner) or the Design Professional in General Responsible Charge must request permission to upload documents to the DSA Certification Box project folder by completing and submitting an [Access Request](#) through the DSA website. An electronic invitation containing instructions to set up an account will be sent via email.
- Project documentation may be uploaded to DSA Certification Box by the

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district/design/construction team as records become available; however, each upload should include a completed form DSA 302.

- Responses to any of the issues listed on the form DSA 301-P may be made anytime by the district/design/construction team by using form DSA 302 and uploading it to the DSA Certification Box.

### 2.7.2 Requesting DSA to re-examine the project for certification requires the following actions:

- Form DSA 302 must be completed, including checking “This is a Request for Re-examination.”
  - The form must then be uploaded to the DSA Certification Box.
  - A copy of the form must be sent electronically (email) to the appropriate DSA regional office as follows:
    - Region 01 [DSACertificationOakland@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:DSACertificationOakland@dgs.ca.gov)
    - Region 02 [DSACertificationSacramento@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:DSACertificationSacramento@dgs.ca.gov)
    - Region 03 [DSACertificationLosAngeles@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:DSACertificationLosAngeles@dgs.ca.gov)
    - Region 04 [DSACertificationSanDiego@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:DSACertificationSanDiego@dgs.ca.gov)
  - If a re-examination fee is required (see section 2.8), then the fee along with a copy of the form must be mailed or delivered to the appropriate DSA Regional Office. (For clarification, in this instance a completed form DSA 302 is now in the DSA Certification Box, has been emailed and a hard copy is now being sent to the regional office along with the re-examination fee.)
- Comprehensive complete DSA 302 request packages addressing every item listed on the DSA 301-P form are highly recommended; however, DSA will process partial requests (unless they are transmitted without a DSA 302 form). The re-examination fee, if required, will apply to submittals regardless of their completeness.
- If the re-examination of the file results in certification, then DSA will issue a Certification Letter to the School District and the DSA 301-P notice will be removed from the DSA website.
- If the re-examination of the file does not result in certification of the project, then DSA will issue an updated DSA 301-P and post it in the DSA Certification Box.
- Subsequent transmittal of documents and responses to unresolved items listed on the DSA 301-P Revised Notification repeats the same process outlined above and will require payment of a re-examination fee.

## 2.8 Re-Examination Fees

**2.8.1** No fee is required for the first request for the project to be re-examined for certification if it is received within 12 months from the date of the DSA 301-N Notification (or 90-day letter for a transition project).

**2.8.2** Any subsequent re-examination requests, or any first re-examination requests received 12 months after the date of the DSA 301-N Notification (or 90-day letter for a transition project), must include a re-examination fee based on the following construction cost schedule:

- Projects with construction cost less than \$5 million:
  - **\$500 re-examination fee**



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- Projects with construction cost between \$5 million and \$50 million:
  - **\$750 re-examination fee**
- Projects with construction cost greater than \$50 million:
  - **\$1000 re-examination fee**

### 2.9 Rescinding DSA 301 Notification

DSA 301-N or DSA 301-P Notifications may be rescinded at the discretion of DSA when the district makes a request and documents both of the following conditions:

- Construction is not complete and the contractor is still mobilized at the site.
- No portions of the project are occupied or otherwise in use.

### 2.10 New projects associated with uncertified projects:

See DSA IR A-20 for discussion of new projects that are associated with uncertified projects.

## 3. TRANSITION:

Projects that have already entered the certification phase or that were constructed prior to the implementation of DSAbbox/Inspection card system use the following processes:

### 3.1 Projects with no DSAbbox accounts and no 90-day letter issued

- Form DSA 301-N will be created and sent to the following:
  - The school district (owner) "Attention Director of Facilities."
  - The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- Required documents may be mailed or delivered to Regional Office.
- After 60 days, DSA staff will review and either create a Certification Letter or a DSA 301-P.
- The certification letter or DSA 301-P will be sent to the following:
  - The school district (owner) "Attention District Superintendent" and "Attention Director of Facilities."
  - The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- DSA 301-P forms will be posted on the DSA website in the DSA Certification Box.
- Certification letters will be uploaded to ADM.

### 3.2 Projects that have 90-day letters issued

- After the 90-day period has passed, DSA staff will review and either create a Certification Letter or DSA 301-P.
- The certification letter or DSA 301-P will be sent to the following:
  - The school district (owner) "Attention District Superintendent" and "Attention Director of Facilities."
  - The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- DSA 301-P forms will be posted on the DSA website in the DSA Certification Box.
- Certification letters will be uploaded to ADM.

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### **3.3 Requests for Re-Examination of “Closed” Uncertified Projects (not applicable to projects that have been issued a form 301-P)**

- DSA staff will re-examine the project for certification. If the re-examination of the file does not result in certification of the project, then DSA will complete a form DSA 301-P listing the outstanding requirements.
- The certification letter or DSA 301-P will be sent to the following:
  - The school district (owner) “Attention District Superintendent” and “Attention Director of Facilities.”
  - The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- DSA 301-P forms will be posted on the DSA website in the DSA Certification Box.
- Certification letters will be uploaded to ADM.

### **3.4 Re-examination initiated by DSA (Legacy Projects) (not applicable to projects that have been issued a form 301-P)**

- DSA staff will continue to use Alternate Process (AP) letter templates to create letters communicating outstanding requirements for certification. These will continue to be mailed to School Districts.
- If no response has been received to the AP letter after 60 days, the AP letter will be posted on the DSA website in the DSA Certification Box.
- If a response is received, DSA staff will review and either create a Certification Letter or update the AP letter listing the outstanding requirements.
- The certification letter or legacy AP letter will be sent to the following:
  - The school district (owner) “Attention District Superintendent” and “Attention Director of Facilities.”
  - The Design Professional in General Responsible Charge.
- Legacy AP letters will be posted on the DSA website in the DSA Certification Box.
- Certification letters will be uploaded to ADM.

### **3.5 Pre-Tracker Projects**

- All pre-tracker projects will be treated as “Legacy Projects” and follow that process.

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A DSA Procedure documents a process or series of steps that DSA staff and/or external stakeholders must complete in order to fulfill one or more administrative requirements of DSA's review and approval of plans and specifications and construction oversight programs.