



ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR SPECIAL INSPECTION AGENCIES

AC291

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PREFACE

The attached accreditation criteria have been issued to provide all interested parties with guidelines on implementing performance features of the applicable standards referenced herein. The criteria were developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Accreditation Committee and are effective on the date shown above. All accreditations issued or reissued on or after the effective date must comply with these criteria. If the criteria are an updated version from a previous edition, refer to table of revisions at the end of the criteria. These criteria may be further revised as the need dictates.

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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR SPECIAL INSPECTION AGENCIES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 **Scope:** These criteria set forth the requirements for obtaining and maintaining International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Special Inspection Agency (SIA) accreditation. These criteria supplement the IAS Rules of Procedure for Special Inspection Agencies.
- 1.2 **References and Normative Documents:** Publications listed below refer to current editions (unless otherwise stated).
 - 1.2.1 *International Building Code®* (IBC) or applicable codes currently adopted by the jurisdiction in which the project is to be constructed.
 - 1.2.2 ISO/IEC Standard 17020, Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection.
 - 1.2.3 IAS Rules of Procedure for Special Inspection Agency Accreditation.
 - 1.2.4 ICC/IAS *Model Program for Special Inspection*.
 - 1.2.5 ILAC P10, ILAC Policy on Metrological Traceability of Measurement Results.
 - 1.2.6 ILAC P15, Application of ISO/IEC 17020:2012 for the Accreditation of Inspection Bodies.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

The definitions contained in ISO/IEC Standard 17000, International Building Code (IBC®), and the applicable rules and regulations of the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) are applicable.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY

Accreditation services are available to organizations that provide special inspection services.

4.0 SIA ORGANIZATION REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 The Special Inspection Agency (SIA) shall be a legal entity.
- 4.2 The SIA shall have evidence of professional liability insurance.

Note: The insurance should meet applicable regulatory requirements and/or contractual requirements.
- 4.3 The SIA shall identify and analyze risks and threats to impartiality on an on-going basis and document actions to minimize or eliminate risks on an ongoing basis.

Note: Risks to impartiality can arise from situations where management, staff and special inspectors experience undue pressure from any source, internal or external, that could influence the results of special inspection(s), project(s) signoff, contract(s)/quote(s) approval, work scheduling or any other related activity.

- 4.4 The SIA shall document and implement a procedure on Code of Conduct.
- 4.5 Management of the SIA shall document its independence and impartiality requirements outlined below. *SIA personnel shall sign an acknowledgement of these requirements.*
 - 4.5.1 The SIA and its personnel shall not be part of or have a financial or other interest in the construction, manufacture, representation, supply, installation or maintenance of the structures or components (including personnel, facility, technology or methodology) which they inspect, or in entities that supply similar competitive items or services.
 - 4.5.2 SIA personnel shall declare any conflicts of interest as they arise. *The SIA shall maintain records of such declarations.*
 - 4.5.3 The SIA shall not engage in any activities that may conflict with their independence.
 - 4.5.4 The SIA must operate in a nondiscriminatory, transparent manner to allow full access to its services by relevant clients.
 - 4.5.5 The SIA must operate in compliance with the rules and regulations of the AHJ regarding Special Inspections.

5.0 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DOCUMENTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 The SIA shall develop and maintain Management System Documentation (MSD) demonstrating compliance with the requirements of this accreditation criteria.

Note: The MSD includes all the necessary consists of manuals, procedures, policies, forms, work instructions and other relevant documents (i.e. references, codes) that support pertinent to the special inspection function activities. The MSD of the SIA are maintained as Controlled Documents.
- 5.2 The SIA shall document the:
 - 5.2.1 Process of revising and managing the MSD.
 - 5.2.2 Process of reviewing and approving MSD for use by authorized SIA personnel.
 - 5.2.3 Process of accessibility to MSD.
 - 5.2.4 Process of ensuring the use of current MSD.
- 5.3 The SIA shall uniquely identify and control documents by including:
 - 5.3.1 The date of issue,
 - 5.3.2 The revision date or version,
 - 5.3.3 Page numbering and total number of pages, and
 - 5.3.4 Identification of individual(s) authorizing the document.
- 5.4 The SIA shall maintain a list identifying the current revision status of documents.
- 5.5 Obsolete documents shall be retained for either legal or other purposes in accordance with the SIA's retention policy.

- 5.6 The SIA shall identify the inspection categories they are competent to perform. The SIA shall document inspection method/procedure for each category of inspection under its desired or accredited scope of accreditation.
- 5.7 The SIA shall document safety procedures to conduct inspections within the scope of accreditation.
- 5.8 Complaints from clients and regulatory agencies and appeals from clients shall be processed in accordance with documented procedures. *Records of all complaints, appeals, and their resolutions shall be maintained.* The complaints and appeals process shall include at least the following:
- 5.8.1 A description of the complaint and appeals handling process for receiving, validating and investigating complaints and/or appeals.
 - 5.8.2 A process to ensure appropriate action is taken.
 - 5.8.3 The assignment of responsibility within the SIA to gather and verify information to facilitate an independent investigation of the complaint and/or appeal while ensuring SIA personnel involved in the original inspection activities are not part of the investigation.
 - 5.8.4 An acknowledgement of receipt of complaint and/or appeal in a timely manner.
 - 5.8.5 A process to provide a response confirming resolution of the complaints and/or appeals process.
- 5.9 The SIA shall document the process for collecting client feedback. *The SIA shall maintain records of feedback and its analysis.*
- Note:** Examples of feedback include client satisfaction surveys and client comments on inspection reports. Job site visits and meetings with clients can also generate valuable feedback.
- 5.10 The SIA shall document its process detailing requirements for identification, storage, protection, retrieval, retention time and disposal of records. For electronic record keeping, plans for backup of data and recovery of data (in case of accidental loss of data) shall be included.
- 5.11 The SIA shall conduct internal audits annually in accordance with its procedures. *Records of these internal audits shall be maintained.*
- Nonconformities identified during internal audits shall be addressed in accordance with SIA's corrective action procedure.
- 5.12 Management Reviews (MR) shall be conducted annually in accordance with SIA's procedures. *Records must show that during these MRs, the SIA management personnel reviewed the following items:*
- 5.12.1 changes in internal and external issues that are relevant to the SIA,

- 5.12.2 suitability of policies and procedures,
 - 5.12.3 outcome of recent internal audits,
 - 5.12.4 assessments by external bodies, including accreditation bodies,
 - 5.12.5 client feedback,
 - 5.12.6 corrective actions,
 - 5.12.7 status of actions from previous MRs,
 - 5.12.8 the fulfilment of objectives,
 - 5.12.9 changes in the volume and type of inspection activities,
 - 5.12.10 complaints and appeals,
 - 5.12.11 effectiveness of any implemented improvements,
 - 5.12.12 adequacy of resources,
 - 5.12.13 the need for training of personnel,
 - 5.12.14 results of risk analysis.
- 5.13 The SIA shall evaluate the need for corrective actions to address nonconformities. The SIA shall perform root cause analysis and resolve nonconformities, as needed. *Records of the effectiveness of the actions taken and results of implementation shall be maintained.*
- 5.14 The SIA shall evaluate the need for preventive actions to prevent the occurrence of nonconformities. *Records of the effectiveness of the actions taken and results of implementation shall be maintained.*

6.0 PERSONNEL

- 6.1 The SIA shall employ or have contracts with an adequate number of personnel to undertake special inspection activities.
- 6.2 The SIA shall have a procedure to ensure confidentiality of the customer information. SIA shall maintain records indicating that the SIA personnel have read and understood the confidentiality requirements.
- 6.3 The SIA shall document its organizational structure. Key relevant positions such as Technical Manager, Quality Manager, Field Supervisor(s), Inspector and their Deputies (see notes) shall be included.

Note 1: Any relationship between special inspections and other activities within the organization shall be defined.

Note 2: Deputies may be needed where the organization cannot perform work without the key person.

- 6.4 SIA personnel shall have job descriptions addressing necessary qualifications, experience and responsibilities to perform their respective duties.
- 6.5 SIA shall maintain documentation (such as a matrix) detailing inspector qualifications, required certifications and relevant experience to the special inspection categories for which the personnel is authorized, including the date of employment and expiration dates for certifications/licenses (if any) complying with the relevant requirements. The SIA shall document the commencement date of authorization for each special inspector per category for which they are authorized by SIA Management.
- 6.6 The SIA shall maintain documentation that identifies personnel who are authorized by the SIA to perform technical reviews, approvals and release of reports.
- 6.7 The documentation shall also identify the personnel that are authorized to perform onsite supervision, monitoring and training.
- 6.8 Personnel authorized by the SIA shall meet qualification requirements as specified by the AHJ. In the absence of AHJ mandated qualification requirements, the SIA may utilize Table 2 to develop its personnel qualification requirements.
- 6.9 Documented plan for training SIA personnel shall be established.
- 6.10 The SIA shall have an effective supervision and monitoring system for its personnel. The supervision and monitoring process shall consider the qualifications, experience, training and knowledge for the inspections being undertaken. The monitoring shall be completed within a defined frequency. Review of personnel may include:
 - 6.10.1 Onsite witness of inspections
 - 6.10.2 Technical review of inspection reports
 - 6.10.3 Awareness of policies and procedures
 - 6.10.4 Familiarity with inspection procedures
 - 6.10.5 Appropriate use of current and relevant documentation
 - 6.10.6 Compliance with jurisdictional requirements
 - 6.10.7 Client feedback

7.0 CONTRACTORS AND EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

- 7.1 The SIA may only contract with accredited SIAs accredited to the same scope for inspections.

Note: Inspectors who are contracted and work using the SIA's MSD are not considered to be under this section when they perform inspections.
- 7.2 A list of external providers (inspections, testing and/or calibration) shall be maintained. Records of evaluation and approval of these external providers shall be maintained.

8.0 INSPECTION AND TEST EQUIPMENT

- 8.1 SIA Inspection and test equipment having significant influence on inspection results shall be calibrated by a calibration laboratory accredited by IAS or equivalent accreditation body.
- Note:** Calibration services may not be available for some types of inspection and test equipment. When this occurs calibration or verification procedures must be in compliance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 8.2 SIA shall ensure that inspection and test equipment is verified to be fit for purpose before being put into service.
- 8.3 The SIA shall maintain calibration and/or verification records of inspection and test equipment (owned, rented, witnessed and/or supplied by others).
- 8.4 The SIA shall document its procedures on inspection and test equipment use, storage, transportation, handling of defective equipment and maintenance. Records shall be maintained for the equipment.
- 8.5 The SIA shall maintain records of inspection and test equipment used for conducting special inspections. These records shall include information on equipment name, equipment model, unique identification, range, accuracy, maintenance information, verification checks, and calibration status, as applicable.

9.0 QUOTATION AND/OR CONTRACT

- 9.1 Quotation and/or contract issued shall clearly indicate the scope of inspection work to be performed meeting the applicable requirements.
- 9.2 SIA shall have a procedure for the review of quotation and/or contract to ensure that the appropriate inspection procedure is utilized.
- 9.3 SIA shall ensure the quotation and/or contract is acceptable to its clients prior to commencement of inspection activities.

Note 1: For routine or repeat work requests, review may be limited to considerations of time and human resources. An acceptable record in such cases would be a signed acceptance of the contract by an authorized person.

Note 2: In situations where verbal agreements are acceptable, the SIA should keep a record of all requests and instructions received verbally, dates and the identity of the client's representative.

- 9.4 SIA shall maintain records of signed quotation and/or contract.

10.0 TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- 10.1 The SIA shall maintain records of inspection schedules including dispatch records, as specifically needed per contract.

- 10.2 The SIA shall document procedures for the preparation, acquisition, handling and storage of material samples or field-prepared samples in accordance with applicable codes and/or standards.
- 10.3 Records indicating the traceability of samples prepared by SIA or other agencies involved in preparation, storage and transportation of samples, shall be maintained.
- 10.4 The SIA shall have procedures in place to notify the AHJ and authorized personnel if corrective actions arising from special inspections remain unresolved beyond the allowed duration. Notification procedures must be consistent with the code requirements of the AHJ, where the project is under construction.
- 10.5 The SIA shall maintain discrepancy logs and records of resolutions of discrepancies.
- 10.6 SIA shall ensure that observations or data obtained during inspections are recorded in a timely manner to demonstrate the sufficiency of the inspection and to minimize loss of relevant information.
- 10.7 SIA shall ensure that calculations and data transfers are checked in an appropriate and systematic manner.

Note: Data can include textual material, digital data and anything else that is transferred from one (physical or digital) location to another where errors can occur.

11.0 INSPECTION REPORTS

- 11.1 Issuance of a final inspection report shall occur only after verification that discrepancies in each special inspection category have been resolved to the satisfaction of the owner or their authorized representative.
- 11.2 Inspection reports shall contain the following minimum information, as applicable:
 - 11.2.1 Inspection date, arrival and departure times or total duration onsite, if required by the contract, of the inspector.
 - 11.2.2 Structure and/or item inspected and location within structure.
 - 11.2.3 Reference to applicable codes, standards.
 - 11.2.4 Sheet numbers(s) and revision dates(s) of approved construction documents used for inspection.
 - 11.2.5 Results of inspection and/or tests witnessed or performed.
 - 11.2.6 Resolution of any discrepancies noted during previous inspections.
 - 11.2.7 Description of samples obtained, if any, including quantity, dimensions and relevant physical characteristics. Samples collected and sent to a testing laboratory for evaluation and testing shall have appropriate records showing an unbroken chain of custody.

- 11.2.8 Identification of inspection and test equipment used including equipment brought by others. When environmental conditions are relevant to the conduct of the inspection, records of environmental conditions shall be noted.
- 11.2.9 Names and signatures of the inspector and client's representative (if applicable per contract).
- 11.2.10 The inspection body shall ensure that any amendments to inspection reports and other records can be tracked to previous versions or to original observations. Both the original and amended data, files and reports shall be maintained.

12.0 LINKS TO ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

International Code Council – www.iccsafe.org

These criteria were previously issued: January 2005 as Requirements; May 2005, August 2006, May 2007, April 2008, September 2008, October 2009, May 2010, April 2011, October 2011, August 2012, June 2013, February 2016, August 2016, September 2017, September 2019 and October 2023

Revision Date	Summary of Changes
June 11, 2025	Total revision

Table 1 – Reference Clauses – New AC291 to ISO/IEC 17020 and Previous (2023) Version of AC291

New AC291 Clause	ISO/IEC 17020 Clause (P15)	Previous AC291 Clause (Approved Oct 2023, Effective Jan 1, 2024)
4.1	5.1.1, 5.1.2	4.2, 4.10.1
4.2	5.1.4 (5.1.4)	4.3, 4.10.3
4.3	4.1 (4.1.3 – 4.1.6, A n1 – An3)	4.4, 4.10.4
4.4, 4.5		4.10.2
5.1	8.2, 5.1.3 (5.1.3, 8.2.1, 8.2.4)	4.1
5.2 – 5.5	8.3	4.10.12, 4.10.18, 4.10.19, 4.10.21
5.6, 10.6, 10.7	7.1 (7.1.1, 7.1.3, 7.1.5, 7.1.6)	2.11
5.7		4.8
5.8	7.5	4.14
5.8	7.6	4.14, 4.10.14
5.9	8.5.2b	4.15, 4.10.15
5.10	8.4 (8.4.1)	4.10, 4.10.20
5.11	8.6 (8.6.4, 8.6.5)	4.16, 4.10.13
5.12	8.5 (8.5.2)	4.17
5.13	8.7	4.10.13
5.14	8.8 (8.8.1)	4.10.13
6.1, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.10	6.1 (6.1.1 – 6.1.10, 6.1.12)	4.7, 4.10.7, 4.10.16, 4.10.17, 4.21, 4.22, 5.0
6.2	4.2	4.5, 4.10.2
6.3, 6.4	5.2 (5.2.2 – 5.2.7)	4.6
7.1 – 7.2	6.3 (6.3.1, 6.3.3, 6.3.4)	4.13, 4.10.8
8.1 – 8.5	6.2 (6.2.3, 6.2.4, 6.2.6, 6.2.7, 6.2.9 – 6.2.11)	4.9, 4.10.10
9.1 – 9.4	7.1.5	4.11, 4.10.5
10.2	7.2	4.12, 4.10.11
10.3		4.18
10.4, 10.5		4.10.9, 4.20.4
11.1 – 11.2	7.3 (7.3.1), 7.4 (7.4.2)	4.19, 4.10.6, 4.20

Table 2 — Recommended Certifications and/or Credentialing for Special Inspection Personnel

(The table below may be used in absence of any AHJ requirements)

No.	Special Inspection Category	Required Certification(s) and/or Credentialing
1	Reinforced Concrete	- International Code Council (ICC) Reinforced Concrete Special Inspector (SI) (47) or - American Concrete Institute (ACI) Concrete Construction Special Inspector (CCSI)
2	Concrete Construction (Pre-stressed/Precast)	ICC Pre-stressed SI (92) and ICC Reinforced Concrete SI (47)
3	Soils	- ICC Soils SI (ICC-EC) or - National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET II) (geotechnical or construction or construction material testing or soils)
4	Masonry	- ICC Structural Masonry Special Inspector (84) or - ACI Field Testing Technician-Grade I (ACI-I-F).
5	Structural Steel (Welding), High-Pressure Steam Piping (Welding), Gas Piping (Welding), Hot Water Piping (Welding)	American Welding Society (AWS) Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) or ICC Structural Welding Special Inspector (S2), Certification Scheme for Personnel (CSWIP) (WI 6/92 where admissible). - AWS (Structural Steel: Welding): CWI, according to AWS guidelines or - CSA Standard W178.2 or - SCWI according to AWS guidelines
6	Nondestructive Testing (NDT) (All applicable Methods)	- CP-189 NDT or SNT-TC-1a NDT, or ACCP or equivalent (Hours of field experience) or - ASNT (Structural Steel: Non-Destructive Testing) or - NDT II (Radiographic Testing, RT; Magnetic Particle Testing, MT; Liquid Penetrant Testing, PT; - Ultrasonic Testing, UT) qualified in accordance with American Society of Nondestructive Testing (ASNT) document SNT-TC-1A (current edition). - NDT III (RT, MT, PT, and UT) certified by ASNT. Note: - In-house certification of NDT II is acceptable. - In-house certification of NDT III is not acceptable.
7	Structural Cold-formed Steel	- ICC Commercial Building Inspector or - ICC Residential Building Inspector
8	Steel (High-Strength Bolting)	ICC Structural Steel and Bolting Special Inspector (S1)
9	Post-Installed Structural Anchors in Concrete and Masonry, Prestressed Rock and Soil anchors installation	- ICC Reinforced Concrete SI or - ACI Concrete/Masonry Construction SI or - ACI Adhesive Anchor Installer (ACI-CRSI)
10	Structural Safety - Stability and Demolition, Underpinning, Excavation - Sheet piling, Shoring, and Bracing	RDP, PE, or BS Engineering with Civil/Structural - Valid Site Safety Manager Certification or - NICET II (geotechnical or construction or construction material testing or soils)

No.	Special Inspection Category	Required Certification(s) and/or Credentialing
11	Seismic Isolation Systems	RDP, PE, or BS Engineering with Civil/Structural
12	Pier and Pile Foundations	NICET II (geotechnical or construction or construction material testing or soils)
13	Wood Construction	ICC Commercial Building Inspector or ICC Residential Building Inspector
14	Wall Panels, Curtain Walls, and Veneers	ICC Commercial Building Inspector or ICC Residential Building Inspector
15	Chimneys and Vents	ICC Commercial Mechanical Inspector or ICC Residential Mechanical Inspector
16	Smoke Control Systems	ACG (Air Balance Testing): • Certified Commissioning Technician CxT (ACG-CCT) or • Commissioning Authority CxA (ACG-CA) AABC (Air Balance Testing/Mechanical/smoke Control, Stairwell Pressurization): • Certified Test and Balance Technician (AABC-CTBT) or • Test and Balance Engineer (AABC-TBE) National Environmental Balancing Bureau (NEBB) • Testing, adjusting and balancing (TAB) Certified Professional (CP) or • Testing, adjusting and balancing (TAB) Certified Technician (CT) Testing, Adjusting and Balancing Bureau (TABB): • Certified Technician (TABB-CT) or • Supervisor (TABB-S)
17	Mechanical Systems	• ICC Commercial Mechanical Inspector or • ICC Residential Mechanical Inspector
18	Heating Systems	• ICC Commercial Mechanical Inspector or • ICC Residential Mechanical Inspector
19	Fuel-oil Storage and Piping Systems	• ICC Commercial Mechanical Inspector or • ICC Residential Mechanical Inspector or • American Petroleum Institute (API) Aboveground Storage Tank Inspector
20	Spray-applied Fire-resistant Materials / Intumescent Fire-resistant Coatings / Mastic Fire-resistant Coatings	• ICC Spray-applied Fireproofing Special Inspector (86) or • ICC Fire Inspector I
21	Fire-resistant Penetrations & Joint Systems	• ICC CLA or • UL Firestop Examination or • FM Firestop Examination or • IFC third-party Firestop Special Inspector Examination Notes: • FCIA Training Program to FCIA Manual of Practice, (MOP): • The Firestop Standard – The FCIA Firestop Industry Manual of Practice, developed to be the basis for the FM 4991 Approved Firestop Contractor and UL Qualified Firestop Contractor Exam.

No.	Special Inspection Category	Required Certification(s) and/or Credentialing
		Once a person passes the exam and is employed / appointed by an FM 4991 Approved or UL Qualified Firestop Contractor they become a Designated Responsible Individual (DRI).
22	Sprinkler Systems	• ICC Commercial Building Inspector or • ICC Residential Building Inspector, or • ICC Fire Inspector I or • Certified Fire Inspector (NFPA 1031, where admissible)
23	Standpipe Systems	• ICC Commercial Building Inspector or • ICC Residential Building Inspector, or • ICC Fire Inspector I or • Certified Fire Inspector (NFPA 1031, where admissible)
24	Combustible Exterior Wall Coverings	• Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industry (AWCI) Exterior Insulated Finish System Inspector (EIFS-I)
25	Site Storm Drainage Disposal and Detention/Retention System	• ICC Soil Special Inspector (EC) or • NICET II (geotechnical or construction or construction material testing or soils)
26	Façade Inspection, as per Owner's Contract Provision or AHJ Requirement	• ICC Commercial Building Inspector or • ICC Residential Building Inspector, having 5 years of experience in high-rise building construction/ maintenance/restoration/ design/engineering, inspection
27	Special Cases	• ICC Commercial Building Inspector or • ICC Residential Building Inspector

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