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IAS AccrediCom®

Special Inspection Agencies

NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the June 2026 issue of the IAS Special Inspection Agency Accreditation Program newsletter.

The purpose of the newsletter is to update customers about important developments at IAS and in the industry that may impact your accreditation and business, and to contribute to providing a better understanding of the accreditation process. This issue includes articles on risk areas for special inspection agencies' quality management systems and how to prepare for an assessment.

This issue also contains information on upcoming events and conferences which are part of our educational and technical development of customers and stakeholders. Please send feedback and suggestions for topics you would like to include in this newsletter to Aherrera@iasonline.org.



QMS Risk Areas for Special Inspection Agencies

The IAS Accreditation Program Special Inspection Agencies (SIAs) aims to provide useful information to its customers to continuously find opportunities for improvement. We want to share a general perspective on risk areas that SIAs often face in their Quality Management System (QMS). These problems are rooted in three main areas, **human error**, **documentation gaps**, and **regulatory complexity**.

Because SIAs operate in a high-stakes environment where oversight directly impacts structural safety, typical QMS failures often involve the following:

1. Documentation & Record-Keeping Deficiencies

This is one of the most frequent non-conformances identified during assessments.

- **Incomplete Inspection Reports:** Missing signatures, dates, inspection procedures or specific location details on site (e.g., failing to identify exactly which column or floor was inspected).
- **Version Control Failures:** Using outdated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or field inspection forms/reports templates that do not reflect the latest building codes or agency protocols.
- **Lack of Traceability:** Difficulty tracing a specific material test/inspection result back to the exact location where that material was installed.

2. Inspector Competency & Training Gaps

Special inspections require technical expertise that must be verified and maintained.

- **Missing Credentials:** Failing to maintain up-to-date copies of required licenses and certifications (e.g., ICC, ACI, AWS) for all active inspectors.
- **Inadequate Training Records:** Lacking proof that staff have been trained in internal QMS procedures, leading to inconsistent inspection methods.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Failing to conduct required annual field observations of inspectors to ensure they are following proper inspection and safety procedures in the field.

3. Equipment Calibration and Maintenance Issues

For agencies that use tools like torque wrenches, nuclear density gauges, or calipers, calibration is a critical assessment point.

- **Expired Calibration:** Using equipment that has passed its calibration due date.
- **Missing Traceability:** Calibration records that do not trace back to national or international standards (e.g., NIST).
- **Missing Maintenance and Verification Records:** Periodic maintenance and verification records for equipment not maintained by the agency.
- **Equipment Identification:** Unique identification of equipment sometimes not assigned to equipment.

- **Introduction of New Tools:** Failing to add new equipment to the agency's master calibration schedule immediately upon purchase.

4. Poor Internal Audits & Management Reviews

The QMS must be self-correcting, but many agencies treat these as "paper-only" exercises.

- **Superficial Internal Audits:** Audits that are conducted too infrequently or lack the depth needed to find systemic errors before a third-party auditor does.
- **Internal Auditor qualifications and independence:** Sometimes internal auditors are observed to be not adequately trained and qualified to perform audits besides independence of audit being performed.
- **Failing to Address Root Causes:** When a mistake is found (a "non-conformance"), agencies often fix the immediate error but fail to identify the underlying process failure that caused it.
- **Lack of Management Buy-In:** Management reviews that are incomplete or fail to allocate the necessary resources to fix known quality issues.

5. Communication & Planning Failures

- **Inadequate Inspection Planning:** Failing to properly review project drawings or specifications beforehand, leading to missed inspection points.
- **Siloed Information:** Important project updates from the engineer of record or building department not being communicated to the inspector on the ground.

Keeping in mind that this is only an overview of the risk areas, SIAs should always make sure that their QMS is aligned with ISO/IEC 17020, the appropriate Accreditation Criteria and other applicable standards and regulatory requirements.



Events in 2026

Make plans to attend the following events in 2026.

- **American Institute of Architects Annual Conference**
San Diego, CA | June 10–13, 2026
- **NYSSPE Gala Dinner, 100th Anniversary Centennial Celebration**
Brooklyn, NY | August 6, 2026
- **NYSSPE Annual Conference**
Albany, New York | October 16–18, 2026
- **International Code Council Annual Conference**
Nashville, TN | October 18–21, 2026
- **NCSEA Structural Engineering Summit**
San Francisco, CA | October 27–30, 2026

Need to update your Contact Information with IAS?

Most accredited organizations will eventually need to update the contact person(s) listed in the IAS Portal. Each accredited customer has three designated contacts who receive communication from IAS: a **Technical Contact**, a **Billing Contact**, and a **Legal Contact**. Although some customers use the same person for all three designations, it is best to assign a different individual to each role. Each contact has their own login credentials. To update this information, customers must log into the IAS portal and make the change directly. It is important to keep this information current—and to ensure more than one individual in your organization has access to login information. IAS has created a short video demonstrating how to update contact information.

[Watch the instructional video.](#)



Updates to the Accreditation Criteria

If your company is accredited by IAS, then you need to make sure that you are following the most current accreditation criteria (AC). The Special Inspection Agency Accreditation is based on AC-291. You can see the most current versions of the accreditation criteria on the IAS website. Any updates to the criteria are identified with a vertical line by the affected section of the AC. Being informed of these changes will give you time to start implementing the new requirements before your next assessment.

See the latest version of the criteria in the link below:

[AC-291](#)



Assessor Positions at IAS

IAS is looking for qualified individuals to become assessors for the Special Inspection Agency Accreditation Program. [Learn more about becoming an assessor.](#)

Preparing your QMS for an Assessment

The IAS accreditation process for a Special Inspection Agency (SIA) is conducted in accordance with [IAS AC-291](#) and **ISO/IEC 17020** standard—as well as applicable regulations and standards. To assist in better preparing for the assessment process of SIAs we have prepared the following checklist to identify and close gaps in your Quality Management System (QMS).

1. Management & Structural Requirements

- **Conflict of Interest/Impartiality:** Ensure you have a signed **Impartiality Affidavit** or Ethics Procedure for all staff. Agencies must prove they have no financial interest in the construction or maintenance of the items they inspect.
- **Insurance Coverage:** Verify current policies for **Professional Liability** (often minimum \$500,000) and **General Liability** (often minimum \$1,000,000). Sometimes financial reserves are used for insurance coverage.
- **Organizational Chart:** Maintain a clear chart identifying the **Primary Director** and any Alternative Directors, ensuring they are not employed by any other competing inspection agency.

2. Personnel Competency & Training

- **Certification Log:** Create a master list of all inspectors with up-to-date credentials (e.g., **ICC, ACI, AWS**). Include expiration dates to prevent "expired credential" findings.
- **Field Observations:** Document periodic **performance evaluations** (at least every two years) for each inspector. Auditors will look for records of a senior staff member observing the inspector performing their duties in the field.
- **Training Records:** Keep evidence of internal QMS training, including proof that personnel have read and understood the agency's quality manual and local building code requirements.

3. Equipment & Calibration

- **Equipment Inventory:** A master list of all tools requiring calibration (torque wrenches, calipers, nuclear gauges) with unique IDs.
- **NIST Traceability:** Verify that calibration certificates for all tools are current and traceable to **national standards** (NIST).
- **Out-of-Service Tags:** Ensure any equipment past its calibration date is physically tagged "Do Not Use" and removed from active kits.

4. Technical Records & Reporting

- **Project Documentation:** Audit a sample of recent project files to ensure they contain:
 - The **Statement of Special Inspections (SSI)** for the specific project.
 - Approved project drawings and specifications.
- **Inspection Reports:** Verify that daily reports include specific locations, pass/fail status, and are signed by the inspector.

- **Discrepancy Log:** Maintain a clear process for tracking **non-conforming work** from the moment it is identified until it is signed off as corrected.

5. Internal Quality Audits & Improvement

- **Annual Internal Audit:** Conduct a full "mock audit" of your own system at least once a year. Document the findings and your responses to them.
- **Management Review:** Hold a formal meeting with leadership to review the QMS performance, internal audit results, and any client complaints.
- **Corrective Actions:** For any past errors, show a "closed-loop" record: identify the error, determine the **root cause**, and document the change made to prevent it from happening again.

6. NYC-Specific Requirements (If Applicable)

- **NYC Address Proof:** Provide a utility bill or lease showing a registered NYC business address or proof of an agent in New York State.
- **Registration Status:** Ensure your **DOB NOW** registration and endorsements are current and match the scope you are being audited for.

A better prepared SIA for an assessment is more likely to continue its business without interruption and to provide reassurance to its clients of the quality the SIA can provide. Finding opportunities for improvement is an ongoing activity that will bring better results when the assessment exercise is performed.

Special Inspection Manual

The Special Inspection Manual is published by the International Code Council (ICC) and provides detailed guidance on required special inspections and structural observation. The Manual outlines the special inspections mandated by the International Building Code and referenced material standards, with descriptions of those inspections. It also includes information on creating a special inspection overview program within a building department, including procedures and forms to support program administration. Additionally, the Manual helps users prepare for special inspection certification exams and draft statements of special inspection. [Read more about the Special Inspection Manual.](#)





Promote your Accreditation

IAS customers can promote their accreditations with IAS Accreditation Program Symbols. The symbols can be used in advertisements, websites, brochures, exhibit booths, and other places to promote IAS accreditation. For accreditation symbols, send email to requestamark@iasonline.org.

Need Answers? Get in Touch with IAS

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IAS on Social Media

If you haven't connected with IAS on social media, you may be missing out on the latest accreditation news and updates. IAS shares periodic announcements, industry insights, and program information on dedicated pages across [X](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#). To find us, go to any of these pages and search for International Accreditation Service.



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