
Special Provisions

Design Manual
Chapter 120
Specifications

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Occasionally, there may be a need to use an innovative product or an experimental procedure to address the unique demands of a particular project. Often, these items are not covered by existing specifications, so they may require new or modified specifications to describe their construction and payment. Special Provisions (SPs) are written to cover these situations.

Checking the Specification List

Before drafting a new SP, check PSS to see if an SP already exists that suits the needs of the project.

- Start PSS and navigate to the “Projects” screen of the your project.
- Click on the “Specifications” button on the right side of the screen.
- The “Specifications Titles” screen appears, and a list of available specifications are shown on the “Titles” tab in the middle part of the screen.
- The list can be sorted by number, description, status, effective date, expiration date, or controller by double-clicking on the desired heading.
- The history of changes made to a specification can be viewed by clicking the “History” tab.
- Click here for a link to the current [Special Provisions](#).

Using an Existing Special Provision

- If an SP is found that will satisfactorily cover work on the project, select the specification by clicking on its row in the list.
- The row highlights and the “Update” button at the bottom of the page becomes active.
- Click the “Update” button to add the highlighted specification to the list of titles at the top of the screen.

Using a New or Modified Special Provision

Modifying a previously used SP requires the same steps as writing a new one:

- Determine an appropriate title for the SP.
- Type the title into the space at the bottom of the “Specifications Titles” screen.
- The “Update” button at the bottom of the page becomes active.
- Click the “Update” button to add this title to the list of titles at the top of the screen.
- Contact the Specifications Section and request the proper number to identify the SP.
- When drafting a new SP or modifying an existing one, follow the guidelines in Section [120A-4](#). For additional information specific to writing Special Provisions, refer to the document titled “Requirements for Preparing and Submitting Special Provisions” located at: W:\Highway\Specifications\User Forms & Information\ or follow the link from: <https://iowadot.gov/specifications/requirements/RequirementsforSubmittingSpecialProvisions.pdf>.
- Draft the SP and save it as a .doc file. Name the file according to the instructions provided in “Requirements for State & Local Systems SPs.”
- Place a copy of the SP in the following folder:
W:\Highway\Specifications\Special Provisions\SP_Turn-In\

Note: The Specifications Section may be contacted during the development of SPs for possible assistance or a review of the extensive database of previously used specifications.

Proprietary Products

Specifications using patented or proprietary (brand name) products or processes are generally discouraged; it is preferred to describe the product using generic, end-results-type language. However, it is sometimes necessary to call out a specific brand name, especially when using a new or experimental product:

- If a range of proprietary products exists that will meet the needs of the project, list at least three acceptable alternatives, along with the phrase “or approved equal,” for example:
“Hydrants shall comply with AWWA Standard C502, have a three-nozzle arrangement, and be manufactured by Clow, Mueller, American Darling, or approved equal.”
- If the needs of the project can be met by only one specific product, state the name of the product in the specifications. In this case, a Public Interest Finding (PIF) must be submitted to the Contracts and Specifications Bureau for approval. Refer to Section [1C-7](#) for more information.

Local Systems Projects

District offices review SPs that are written for Local Systems projects.

When the project is located on a Primary route, follow the guidance above for writing and submitting SPs. When the project is located on a route other than a Primary route:

- Review the SP for accuracy, clarity, and proper formatting.
- Verify that the title of the SP is listed on the project’s “Specifications Titles” screen in PSS.
- Save a .pdf copy of the SP in the following folder: W:\Highway\Specifications\Special Provisions\SP_Turn-In\

Chronology of Changes to Design Manual Section: 120A-003 Special Provisions

3/4/2021	Revised Changed Office of Contracts to Contracts and Specifications Bureau.
6/25/2019	Revised Updated hyperlinks. Updated header logo and text.
11/20/2018	Revised Redirected link to document for Requirement for Submitting Special Provisions at the bottom of page 1.
6/12/2018	Revised Corrected header and fixed broken hyperlinks.
2/10/2012	Revised Added hyperlink to current Special Provisions. Removed file path to Special Provisions. Updated hyperlinks. Added: NOTE: The Specifications Section may be contacted during the development of SPs for possible assistance or a review of the extensive database of previously used specifications. Removed: Include a hard copy of the SP with the plan submittal at Contracts Turn-In (See Section 1E-9).
7/12/2010	NEW Moved from 1C-5.