

Practice Note: Site Reviews

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The Investigation Committee has assessed several complaints related to review of buildings by responsible professionals. These complaints have related both to the review of site prior to the development of a design, as well as reviewing construction sites for compliance with engineering drawings and specifications. This practice note will clarify the minimum standard expected of practitioners in their direct review of the site or supervision of reviews by others.

1. **Practitioners, or another suitably qualified person responsible to them, must perform site reviews for the work represented in the drawings they've sealed.** The Investigation Committee recognizes that practitioners are occasionally engaged to prepare design drawings for projects that do not advance to construction. The Investigation Committee also recognizes that practitioners may not ultimately be the professional engaged to perform site reviews. However, practitioners should generally provide design services on the assumption that the project will proceed to construction and that they are also being engaged to review the implementation of the design. Frequently the Building Permit Process requires that Professional Designers provide Letters of Assurance or commitments to conduct field reviews during construction. There are two instances where a practitioner may professionally assume that they will not be performing the site review. They are:
 - a. Projects where the contract between the practitioner and the client clearly indicates that site review services will be performed by others, in which case the drawings must clearly indicate that the designer has not been engaged to perform site reviews; and
 - b. Projects where the contract between the practitioner and the client has been terminated, in which case the practitioner must notify the authority having jurisdiction concerning the cessation of field review commitments.
2. **Practitioners should properly document their site reviews.** Practitioners must maintain a record of each site review, including the date of the visit, personnel in attendance, observations made during the review, directions provided verbally on-site, and, where appropriate, photographs. Verbal instructions provided on-site should also be committed to the permanent project records after the review. If a site review is carried out by a third party on behalf of the practitioner, the practitioner must certify the record document as reviewed

with a signature and the date. Appropriate third-party reviews are described in Item 5 below.

3. **Practitioners should perform a sufficient number of site reviews over the course of the project to allow for a reliable certification of the work.** The investigation committee recognizes that a prescribed number of site reviews is not feasible. However, practitioners should indicate to their clients and contractors a minimum number and the stages of site reviews required. Practitioners should clearly identify any critical stages where a site review must be performed prior to implementation of a subsequent phase. For example, practitioners must make clear to clients and contractors the importance of a site review prior to the pouring of concrete cast-in-place piles, as the confirmation of the depth of the pile and placement of steel is impractical after the pour. Where a practitioner becomes aware of a project proceeding past a critical stage without a review and without alternative provisions, the practitioner must notify the Authority Having Jurisdiction of the issues created and the potential resolution.
4. **Where a practitioner is delegating a site review to another person, they should ensure that the reviewer is qualified to perform the task.** The level of training and experience of the reviewer should be consistent with the technical needs of the assignment. For example, should an intern who is a recent graduate be sent to perform a site review by themselves, the work must be appropriate for their comprehension of the work, carried out under clear instructions and guidelines, and conducted with the benefit of instant communication with an experienced supervisor available remotely.
5. **Practitioners should be very cautious about relying on site reviews performed by individuals, who may have a conflict of interest.** The building owner or the contractor constructing the project may lack the impartiality to effectively perform a site review. Ideally, practitioners should directly review the site or have the site reviewed by a person employed under their supervision. Alternatively, an impartial third-party can be engaged to perform the site review. Note that this applies equally to new-build projects as well as reviewing an existing building prior to making recommendations for changes to that building. Generally it is inappropriate to substitute direct reviews or pre-arranged third-party reviews with correspondence sent by the contractor, even if photographs are included. In some cases in remote job sites and/or due to extraordinary circumstances, it may be necessary to rely on information provided from the field by owners or contractors. In these cases, the practitioner must document the circumstances, the specifics concerning the exchange of information, and reasons why the information is judged to be reliable. Failure to do so could be judged to be professional misconduct.