

ARCHITECTS PARTNER WITH CONTRACTORS TO SET STANDARDS PRACTICES

For several years, a number of AIA-DE members have been active participants in a group known as the ABC-AIA Partnering Committee, that has provided a forum for discussing topics of common interest to owners, contractors and design professionals in the delivery of construction projects. Membership includes ABC Delaware and various large regional project or property owners (Delaware Department of Administrative Services, University of Delaware, Delaware River & Bay Authority, Christiana Care, New Castle County, Diamond State Port Corporation, Delaware Tech, City of Wilmington, Brandywine School District, Red Clay School District).

After extensive study and discussion, the committee has issued a number of best practices recommendations for the benefit of all project participants and the Delaware construction community at large, in the areas of:

Record Drawings: Record drawings, often referred to as “As-Builts”, are an important product of the construction process, but one in which there is often a great deal of confusion between the owner, design professional, contractor, sub-contractor and field supervision. This commentary helps to define the major issues in this process and make recommendations for their resolution.

Electronic Documents: The utilization of CAD-prepared drawings presents great value and opportunities in the documentation of construction projects. However, the almost universal use of computer-aided drafting in the preparation of construction documents has created new challenges for owners, design professionals and contractors. Each party to the construction process brings different viewpoints, concerns and issues regarding drawing usage. This recommendation quantifies these issues and provides guidance in their resolution.

Requests for Information (RFI's): When used properly, the Request for Information (RFI) can provide an orderly, reliable and documented mechanism to field and resolve legitimate contractor questions. The response from the design professionals can provide valuable guidance or the RFI can result in the issuance Supplemental Instructions. Occasionally, however, the RFI is misused to provide additional time for the contractor, especially on projects containing liquidated damages. RFI's can also be used to set the stage for future change orders. AS RFI's are more and more often used in lieu of phone conversations or shop drawing submission questions, as a tool in resolving minor issues.

Special Inspections: The adoption of the International Building Code has resulted in an increased emphasis on the Special Inspection process in many of our local municipalities, including New Castle County, Wilmington, the State of Delaware and the City of Newark. There have been various interpretations of the intent and implementation of the Code's provisions regarding the process. Owners, contractors and design professionals each bear specific responsibilities under the new guidelines as summarized in this recommendations.

Design-Build Construction: The Joint Committee is working on a fifth white paper regarding Design-Build Construction to be issued sometime in 2006.