

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters – Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 7109.17 – National Construction Certification Handbook
Chapter 10 - Construction Certification Program**

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Approved by: Frederick L. Norbury, Associate Deputy Chief, NFS

Date approved: December 14, 2004

Responsible Staff:

Explanation of changes: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

7109.17: This amendment changes the title of FSH 7109.17 to National Construction Certification Handbook (formerly, Construction Certification Handbook).

Zero Code: Reformats and makes minor technical and editorial changes. Changes “Regional Engineering Certifying Officer” to “Regional Construction Certification Officer” in the introductory paragraph.

10: Reformats and reorganizes this chapter. Changes Regional Engineering Certifying Officer to Regional Construction Certification Officer and makes other minor technical and editorial changes throughout. Specific changes are as follows:

10.40 - 10.42: Changes cross- reference from exhibit 01, section 10.6, to exhibit 01, section 10.7 (sec. 10.4). Removes responsibilities of Forest Staff Officer for Engineering Activities and Region 8 Engineering Certifying Officer (formerly section 41.1). Recodes responsibilities of Engineering Representative and Contracting Officers Representative to section 41.1. Adds responsibilities of certified employee (section 10.42).

10.6: Changes the caption from “Certification Process” to “Construction Work Requiring Certification” and adds cross-reference to FSM 7115.1, FSM 7313.03, and FSM 7721.34 for direction.

10.7: Establishes this code to provide direction on the certification program schedule. Adds exhibit 01 (formerly 10.06, exhibit 01) and updates schedule to reflect changes from written to electronic exams.

11: Changes the caption from “Construction Certification Program Inventory” to “Program Records” and recodes direction on Regional Certification records to section 11.04b.

11.04 - 11.04b: Establishes these codes to provide responsibility for national database management (sec. 11.04a) and regional records maintenance (sec. 11.04b).

12: Clarifies that the Forest Service staff Officer for Engineering activities develops and monitors necessary training for construction projects.

13.12: Changes the caption to Inspector, recodes direction formerly coded at section 13.13 to this section, and relocates direction on Construction Contracting officer’s Representative to section 13.14.

13.11: Changes caption and provides direction for the inspector-in-training. Recodes the direction on the Engineering Representative to section 13.13.

13.13: Changes the caption to Engineering Representative and relocates to this section, the direction formerly coded at section 13.11.

13.14: Changes the caption to Construction Contracting Officer Representative, recodes to this section, the direction formerly coded to section 13.12; and relocates direction on inspector-in-training to section 13.11.

13.4: Establishes this code to provide direction on other construction activities that the Forest Officer for Engineering Activities is responsible for.

14: Establishes code to provide direction on the Forest Service Acquisition Regulation System.

20: Reorganizes and revises code and direction to implement electronic examinations, and makes other minor technical and editorial changes throughout this chapter. Changes “Regional Engineering Certifying Officer (RECO)” to “Regional Construction Certification Officer (RCCO). Specific changes are as follows:

21.3: Adds the term “candidates” to the caption.

22.04a: Changes the caption from “Washington Office, Certification Coordinator” to “Director of Engineering, Washington Office” and updates the direction accordingly.

22.04b: Changes the caption from “Regional Engineering Certifying Officer” to “National Construction Certification Program Coordination” and adds direction accordingly.

22.04c: Establishes code, recodes the direction formerly at 22.04b to this section, and adds responsibility of Regional Construction Certification Officer to develop, review, maintain, and update exam materials.

22.04d: Establishes code to provide direction to employees regarding responsibly for certification exams.

22.2: Changes caption to Development of Electronic Exams and revises the direction accordingly. Removes exhibit 01, Sample Construction Certification Program Written Examination Schedule.

22.3: Changes caption from “Post-Examination Requirements” to “Procedures for electronic examinations” and revises the direction accordingly.

22.4: Revises direction for administrative requirements.

22.5: Establishes this code to provide direction on the procedure for waiving electronic exams.

22.6: Establishes this code to provide direction on the external technical certification exams.

23.2: Relocates direction on document preparation to this section (formerly sec. 22.21). Revises direction for preparation of form FS-7100-21, Examiner’s Rating and Comments.

29: Establishes code and relocates all exhibits to this section.

30: Changes caption of chapter 30 from “Recertification” to “Post Certification.”

31: Revises direction regarding when the Regional Construction Certification Officer can revoke an employee’s certification.

32: Clarifies expiration of certification.

33: Adds minimum requirements for experience and training.

33.1: Establishes code to provide direction on recommendation for recertification.

33.2: Establishes code to provide direction on waiver of recertification requirements.

34: Establishes code to provide direction on maintenance training.

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Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

10.2 - Objective

In addition to the objectives found in FSM 7115.02, the National Construction Certification Program provides for organized and monitored training and development of personnel who meet established standards and qualify to carry out construction project responsibilities.

10.3 - Policy

See FSM 7115.03 for policy regarding the construction certification program.

10.4 - Responsibility

See FSM 7115.04 for broad responsibilities related to the National Construction Certification Program. The schedule of specific tasks and responsibilities are listed in section 10.7, exhibit 01. 10.41 Engineering Representative and Contracting Officer Representative

It is the responsibility of the Engineering Representative (ER) or Contracting Officer Representative (COR) to document completed Inspector-in-Training assignments (sec.13.11) in an employee's training file, and send a copy of the documentation to the Forest Staff Officer for Engineering Activities or the Regional Construction Certification Officer (RCCO).

10.42 - Certified Employees

Each certified employee must maintain a record that documents:

1. Training and experience meeting requirements for certification (sec. 13 and sec. 27).
2. Training meeting requirements for certification as a Contracting Officer Representative as identified in USDA Departmental Regulation 5001-1 and FSH 6309.32.

10.6 - Construction Work Requiring Certification

See FSM 7115.1, FSM 7313.03, and FSM 7721.34 for direction on construction work requiring certification.

10.7 - Certification Program Schedule

Exhibit 01 lists the various actions required in the certification process, assignment of responsibility and preferred schedule for performing the various tasks.

10.7 - Exhibit 01

Certification Program Schedule and Assignments

Key to Acronyms:

WO - WO Engineering Editorial Staff

NCCPC - National Construction Certification Program Coordinator

RCCO - Regional Construction Certification Officer

| Completion Date | Action | WO | NCCPC | RCCO | Forest |
|---------------------------------|---|----|-------|------|--------|
| March | Conduct electronic exams. | | | | X |
| 3/1 | Host Region notifies participants of logistics for traveling to the annual RCCO meeting. | | | X | |
| Three weeks prior to oral exams | Issue schedule of oral exams and request FS-7100-21's from candidates. | | | X | X |
| April | Conduct oral exams. | | | X | X |
| 4/15 | Send results of electronic exams to RCCOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-liner letters • Statistical Reports • Evaluations | | X | | |
| 4/30 | Determine need to revise exam materials and form review team. | | | X | |
| 4/30 | Send results of exams to Forests. | | | X | |
| 5/1 | Call for agenda items for annual meeting to NCCPC. | | X | | |
| 5/10 | Report results of oral exams to RCCO. | | | | X |
| 5/15 | Report results of oral exams to NCCPC. | | | X | |

10.7 - Exhibit 01--Continued

| Completion Date | Action | WO | NCCPC | RCCO | Forest |
|------------------------------|---|----|-------|------|--------|
| 5/30 | Review results of electronic exams with candidates. Identify certification needs and develop training plan. This information will be used to submit nominations for exams and recertifications. | | | | X |
| on-going | Provide formal training, training assignments, and performance testing to prepare individuals for exams and certification as Inspectors, CORs, and ERs. | | | X | X |
| 6/1 | Issue draft agenda for annual RCCO meeting. | | X | | |
| 6/15 | Send certificates to RCCOs. | | X | | |
| 6/20 | Send certificates to Forests. | | | X | |
| 6/30 | Present certificates to individuals. | | | | X |
| 4 th week of June | Annual RCCO meeting. | | X | | |
| 8/1 | Responsible Region submits revised exam, self-study guide, and notification letter to RCCOs and technical experts for review. | | | X | |
| 8/1 | Issue call letter to RCCOs for nominations for October electronic exams. | | X | | |
| 8/5 | Issue call letter to Forests for nominations for October electronic exams. | | | X | |
| 8/15 | Technical experts respond to revised exam. | | | X | |

10.7 - Exhibit 01--Continued

| Completion Date | Action | WO | NCCPC | RCCO | Forest |
|---------------------------------|--|----|-------|------|--------|
| 9/1 | Responsible Region submits reviewed exam materials (exam, self-study guide, and notification letter) for WO editorial review. | | | X | |
| 9/1 | Submit nominations for October electronic exams to RCCO and issue notification letters to candidates. | | | | X |
| 9/5 | Submit nominations for October electronic exams to NCCPC. | | | X | |
| 9/5 | Send hardcopy self-study guides to Forests for October exams. | | | X | |
| 9/10 | Issue call letter to RCCOs for nominations for March electronic exams and recertification needs. | | X | | |
| 9/15 | Issue call letter to Forests for nominations for March electronic exams and recertification needs to be submitted on FS-7100-18. | | | X | |
| 9/15 | Issue proctor instructions and materials for October exams. | | X | | |
| 10/1 | Return exam materials to responsible Region for review of editorial changes. | X | | | |
| 2 nd week of October | Conduct electronic exams. | | | | X |
| 10/15 | Responsible Region returns marked-up exam materials to WO editorial staff for final compliance review. | | | X | |

10.7 - Exhibit 01--Continued

| Completion Date | Action | WO | NCCPC | RCCO | Forest |
|-----------------|---|----|-------|------|--------|
| 10/15 | Submit annual order for hardcopy self-study guides to WO. | | | X | |
| 11/1 | Submit final exam materials to NCCPC. | X | | | |
| 11/1 | Submit final hardcopy self-study guides to printer. | X | | | |
| 11/1 | Submit list of FAR and AGAR clauses to NCCPC. | | | X | |
| 11/1 | Send one-liner letters and certificates from October exams to RCCOs. | | X | | |
| 11/5 | Send one-liner letters and certificates from October exams to Forests. | | | X | |
| 11/15 | Publish self-study guides and notification letters to certification website. | | X | | |
| 12/15 | Issue request for updated list of Forest Coordinators and Exam Proctors to RCCO. | | | X | |
| 1/1 | Send hardcopy self-study guides to RCCOs. | X | | | |
| 1/1 | Submit nominations for March electronic exams and recertification needs to RCCO. | | | | X |
| 1/10 | Send hardcopy self-study guides to Forests for March exams. | | | X | |
| 1/10 | Submit names and phone numbers of Forest Coordinator and Exam Proctors to the RCCO. | | | | X |

10.7 - Exhibit 01--Continued

| Completion Date | Action | WO | NCCPC | RCCO | Forest |
|------------------------------------|---|----|-------|------|--------|
| 1/15 | Host Region reserve facility and facilitator for annual RCCO meeting. | | | X | |
| 1/15 | Submit names and phone numbers of Forest Coordinators and Exam Proctors to the NCCPC. | | | X | |
| 2/1 | Submit nominations for March electronic exams and recertification needs to NCCPC. | | | X | |
| 2/1 | Issue notification letters to March exam candidates. | | | | X |
| 2/15 | Form panel and reserve facility for oral exams. | | | X | X |
| 2/15 | Update and publish exams to NT server. | | X | | |
| 2/15 | Issue proctor instructions and materials. | | X | | |
| One week prior to conducting exams | Load and test certification browser and test candidate user IDs and passwords. | | | | X |
| Ongoing | With RCCO approval, electronic exams may be given during most of the year. Justification should be based on scheduling conflict or need. Preference of scheduling should not be a consideration. Very few requests for this service are expected and scheduling is negotiated with the NCCPC. | | | | X |

11- Program Records

An automated national records database will be used to store, display, and transfer certification records.

11.04 - Responsibility

11.04a - National Construction Certification Program Coordinator (NCCPC)

The NCCPC is responsible for overall database management, monitoring quality of data, importing results of electronic exams, and producing certificates. The NCCPC must also provide for future development needs of the database and maintenance of the host server.

11.04b - Regional Construction Certification Officer (RCCO)

Each Regional Construction Certification Officer (RCCO) shall maintain a certification record for each candidate containing the following information:

1. Name (Last, first, middle initial).
2. Series
3. Region and Unit.
4. For each category (FSM 7115.1):
 - a. Date of Exam.
 - b. Written Exam Result (Pass or No Pass).
 - c. Date of Oral Exam.
 - d. Oral Exam Result (Pass or No Pass).
 - e. Certification Date.
 - f. Most Recent Recertification Date.
 - g. Revocation date.
 - h. Notes documenting special circumstances or waivers.

The RCCO is responsible for forwarding information on transferred employees and employees who have resigned, retired, or are inactive in the National Construction Certification Program, or are deceased.

12 - Career Development of Personnel Administering Construction Projects

The Forest Staff Officer for Engineering Activities should develop and monitor training for each skill level and category in the program and coordinate with other resource staff officers as applicable. The training and job performance requirements for certification in each category are outlined in each self-study training course. These requirements may be adjusted to individual needs based on previous experience in the category.

13 - Qualification Requirements for Certification of Personnel Administering Construction Projects

13.1 - Qualification Requirements

See section 21 for desired experience and section 27 for exam requirements for each certification category.

13.11 - Inspector-in-Training

To gain the experience necessary to become a certified inspector, an employee should work as an Inspector-in-Training under the guidance of a certified Inspector, Engineering Representative (ER), or Contracting Officer Representative (COR). In situations involving minimal risk, such as low standard roads, an employee who has demonstrated practical competency in the task(s) as a designated Inspector-in-Training may perform inspections under the supervision of the assigned ER or COR.

These appointments shall be valid only for the specific designated project and must be documented in the project file.

13.12 - Inspector

To qualify as an inspector (FSH 2409.15, sec. 04.7; FSH 6309.11, sec. 04.5), an employee must:

1. Have 40 hours of related contract administration training. Training for Public Works Inspector must meet requirements defined in USDA Department Regulation 5001-1 and FSH 6309.32 for Level II CORs.

2. Have been designated as Inspector-in-Training on at least two active contracts. Length of experience should be a minimum of 6 months for each technical category. This can be met by experience in two contracts for 3 months each, or three contracts for 2 months each. This experience may be used to meet requirements in more than one category.

3. Have passed required exams in the following categories within the past 3 years:

a. The technical category requiring inspection.

b. Administration--Timber Sale Contract - Construction Inspector, or Administration--Public Works Contract Inspector.

4. Be designated as an Inspector in writing as prescribed in FSH 2409.15, section 04.6 (Timber Sale) or FSH 6309.11, section 04.4 (Public Works).

5. Have experience reading and understanding contract specifications and applying specifications to on-the-ground conditions as evidenced through performance tests (sec. 21).

13.13 - Engineering Representative

To qualify as a NCCP Timber Sale Engineering Representative (ER) (FSH 2409.15, sec. 04.6), an employee must:

1. Have passed required exams in the following categories within the past 3 years:
 - a. Roads.
 - b. Administration--Timber Sale Contract – Construction Inspector.
 - c. Advanced Administration--Timber Sale Contract--Engineering Representative.
 - d. Any other categories appropriate to the work for which the individual is responsible.
2. Be at or above the journey level. A person who qualifies at the journey level must be able to:
 - a. Perform work of broad scope and complexity that requires the ability to interpret, select, adapt, and apply many guidelines, precedents, and engineering principles and practices that relate to the area of specialization.
 - b. Observe and investigate construction at all stages to identify major problems, make determinations, and take action with limited or no review by a superior.
 - c. Administer construction contracts on projects that could involve a variety of climatic and soil conditions that vary in complexity and duration. During the planning and coordination phases develop alternative approaches or solutions as appropriate for the assignment in the form of recommendations, design changes, new designs, reports, or correspondence.
 - d. Understand the relative risk of various activities of construction projects and be able to allocate resources to ensure critical activities receive appropriate and adequate oversight.

13.14 - Construction Contracting Officer Representative

To qualify as a NCCP Contracting Officer Representative (COR) (FSH 6309.11, sec. 04.4), an employee must:

1. Meet the requirements of Public Works Inspector and complete 16 additional hours of contract administration training as defined in DR 5001-1 and FSH 6309.32.
2. Have passed required exams in the following categories within the past 3 years:
 - a. Technical category(ies) applicable to the specific COR assignment(s). (For categories not included in this Handbook, see sec. 13.4.)
 - b. Administration--Public Works - Inspector.
 - c. Advanced Administration - Public Works - COR.
3. Be at or above the journey level as defined in section 13.13, paragraph 2.

13.2 - Examinations

Verify a candidate's qualifications through performance tests, electronic examinations, and oral examinations (ch. 20). Use desired experience (sec. 21.1, 21.2, and 21.3) to measure proficiency. The desired experience is a guide to be applied at the discretion of the Regional Construction Certification Officer.

13.3 - Recommendation for Certification

Forest Staff Officers for Engineering Activities should submit their recommendations for certification candidates who meet requirements (sec. 13.1 and 21) to the Regional Construction Certification Officer on Form FS-7100-18, Recommended Candidates for Certification and Recertification.

13.4 - Other Construction Activities

The Forest Staff Officer for Engineering Activities is responsible for construction activities. Activities that are outside of the NCCP technical categories require demonstrated technical competencies. These activities may include, but are not limited to, mine reclamation. Competency for such activities may be demonstrated by including in the project file documentation of the following:

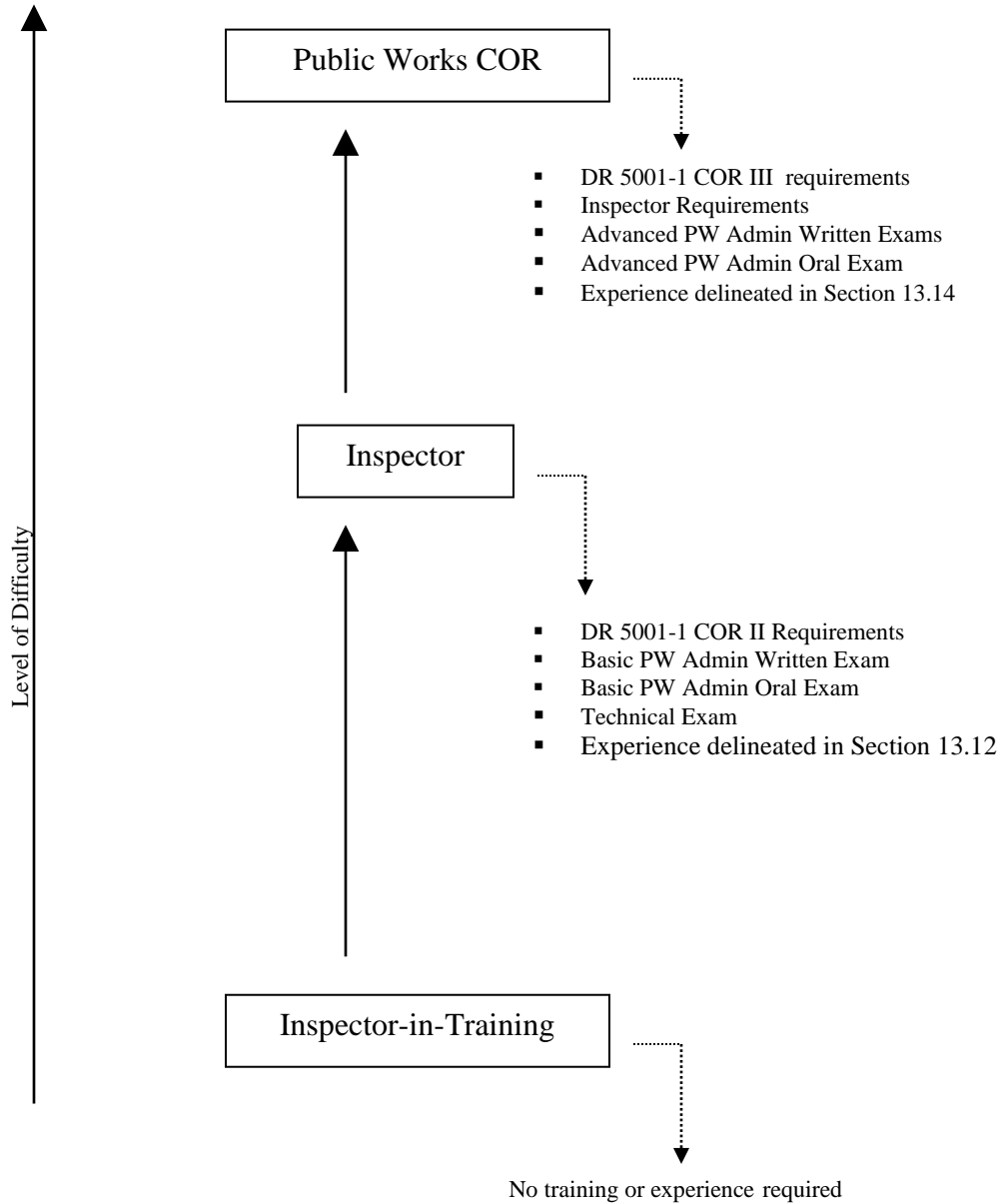
1. The candidate has met applicable qualification requirements as listed in section 13.
2. A technical recommendation from the Forest Staff Officer for Engineering Activities, or other appropriate Staff Officer, documenting the candidate's education and experience (including that of Inspector-in-Training) may replace a technical exam.
3. Evidence of passing electronic and oral exams in public works administrative categories 03 Public Works Inspector and 14 Contracting Officer Representative.

The candidate should not be certified under the National Construction Certification Program. This provides a process for identifying competent individuals to administer construction work not included in the NCCP.

The Regional Construction Certification Officer must document the technical recommendation, date of recommendation, name and title of officer making the recommendation, and the candidate's education and experience in the comment section of the NCCP records database.

13.4 - Exhibit 01

Requirements for Certification to Administer Public Works Construction Contracts



14 - Forest Service Acquisition Regulation System

1. Departmental Regulation (DR) 5001-1, Acquisitions Workforce Training, Delegation, and Tracking Systems, requires that designated Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs) be certified as demonstrating the ability to perform selected pre-award and post-award administrative functions. This certification imposes specific training and experience requirements that must be met in order to be appointed a COR on a USDA contract. The Departmental Regulation addresses administrative skills of the COR and applies to all forms of contracts including, but not limited to, service, supply, and construction. It does not address technical skills. Nor does it apply to timber sale contracts.

2. FSH 6309.32 implements DR 5001-1 and defines agency policy.

3. FSH 7109.17, National Construction Certification Handbook, defines agency policy regarding the administration of construction contracts. NCCP requirements and certification are supplemental to the requirements delineated in DR 5001-1 and FSH 6309.32.