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Masterformat 1995 and 2004 Together

As the transition to Masterformat 2004 is very slow in the Boston area, specification consultants have the problem of maintaining master documents in both CSI Masterformat 1995 with 5-digits, and CSI Masterformat 2004 with 6-digits. Three approaches for the specifier: 1) Do nothing, stay with 5-digits, retire or wait until BIM takes over. 2) Put both 5 and 6 digit numbers in each of your master sections while using the Masterformat 2004 titles. Both numbering systems appear in the section opening, the footer, and in the related work sections. The disadvantage of this system is that you have to edit out one or the other for every project. 3) Same as 2 except use Masterformat 2004 numbers that end in zero. To change from one system to the other, just drop the final zero, and suffer through the few materials that have changed Divisions. This option doesn't work for site and engineering sections. For a table of contents that shows this approach, email mkalin@kalinassociates.com and ask for the '1995/2004 table of contents.'

Material Prices in 2007

You may have seen the newspaper reports about the double-digit price hikes for building materials coming to an end. Steel, lumber, wallboard may decrease by 10 percent in 1007, while asphalt may increase by 10 percent. For specifiers and architects this may slow down the painful value engineering and redesign that had to occur in 2006 as owners went into sticker-shock every time a bid came in. Some projects even changed their structural system. Perhaps someone will compile a master list of value engineering items as everything on the project was up for grabs this past year.

Climate Change

At least for this year, there's little doubt about climate change. On December 15 in Boston, one hardy contractor was laying sod for a new lawn! Even stranger that the sod farm was still open! Since we wrote GreenSpec in 1996, we've always been a proponent of greener choices. After many LEED projects, there's no longer any real difference between our specs for typical projects and LEED projects. We try to remain positive, make baby steps in our choices, but globally its obviously a different story. LEED has been around for 6 years and certified 600 buildings. But with over 50,000 projects going on in the US alone, how small 600 seems. And with 70 percent of the worldwide construction in the next 20 years predicted to be in China and India where does that leave the big picture of sustainable design? Hurry, hurry, hurry please, we have to hang on to the planet for our grandchildren. Even the smallest change counts. For your own home, a simple graphic for green home features is available from the National Association of Home Builders at www.nahb.org/greeninnovation.

Federal Green Guide for Specifiers

The US EPA has partnered with the Federal Environmental Executive and the Whole Building Design Guide (www.wbdg.org) to provide model green construction specification language to be used to supplement full project specs and to green guide specifications. The stated purpose of the specs are to help federal agencies meet their project-specific environmental goals and mandates including the : Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings

Memorandum of Understanding; EPA's Final Guidance on Environmentally Preferable Purchasing; Greening of Government Executive Orders; EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines for recovered content; USDA's Biobased Purchasing Program; ENERGY STAR & DOE Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) Product Efficiency Recommendations; Energy Policy Act of 2005; ASTM, LEED, Green Globes, and other rating systems and standards; And other 'best practices' as determined via industry and public comment.

While some of the language seems philosophical from a strict specifier's view, its a great tool and worth a look, especially for Division 1 sections. One caveat is to be careful with the submittals you ask the contractor for in your specs - better to specify green products and get what you want rather than ask the contractor to report the environmental characteristics of products for no purpose. Files are available in Word or PDF format, you can download them all at once if you prefer. Current contents include nearly 70 sections at fedgreenspecs.wbdg.org.

Proprietary Products for Public Projects

Manufacturers and designers frequently push for proprietary specifications. Working with the private owner and designer, products are frequently specified on a proprietary, no-equal basis. However for public construction projects it is problematic to avoid the issue of 3-equals. An excellent review of the issues was published by the Office of the Inspector General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Although the report was published a few years ago (2003) it highlights the applicable laws, the value of competitive specifications, several Massachusetts Appeals Court Interpretations of the Law, and even recommended language for a non-collusion form in the designer's contract. The message to specifiers is not to prepare fake specs or proprietary specifications that eliminate competition without stating the intent. All states have a process whereby an agency can approve the selection of a proprietary product.

An example from the report: "The municipality specified that the school building roof had to be a certain color that was available from only one manufacturer. The municipality was not able to produce written justifications for this technical requirement. By including technical requirements that only one manufacturer could meet, the specifications effectively eliminated competition; without written justification, the proprietary specifications were unlawful." Editor's Note: ARCAT specifications are always proprietary and list the real options available from the manufacturer for each product. This eliminates fake specs and makes it clear what choices the specifier has made. A potential competitor would need to meet the specified requirements. In our experience, most manufacturers don't mind apples-to-apples competition - its the concealed proprietary specs that are the problem. For a copy of the full 9-page in PDF format, email mkalin@kalinassociates.com and ask for the 'proprietary spec report.' If you have similar documents, please send them along to us.

A healthy, happy and prosperous 2007 for you and yours!

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