

Special Inspection Agency Accreditation

Guide to Helping Building Departments Approve Special Inspections

Introduction

Building Departments are using the IAS Special Inspection Agency Accreditation Program as a resource to assess, verify the competence, and approve accredited special inspection agencies according to requirements in the International Building Code (IBC), Chapter 17. Thank you for the opportunity to answer your questions and show how the program can work for your building department.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is a formal, independent verification that a program or institution meets established quality standards and is competent to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks. IAS is a nonprofit accreditation body and subsidiary of ICC, that provides an independent verification that special inspection agencies meet the requirements in IBC, Chapter 17.

What are Special Inspections?

Special inspections is defined by the International Building Code (IBC) as *“the inspection of construction requiring the expertise of an approved special inspector in order to ensure compliance with the code and the approved construction documents”*.

What is the Accreditation based on?

Accreditation is based on the requirements in the International Building Code, Chapter 17, as well as the IAS Accreditation Criteria (AC291).

Why is IAS Accreditation Important?

- It helps Building Departments implement the Special Inspection requirements in Chapter 17 of the International Building Code®
- Provides building departments with resources to verify that special inspection agencies are qualified to work in their jurisdiction.
- Helps building departments to approve special inspections.

What areas are covered by the Accreditation?

IAS accreditation covers the 16 major categories listed in the International Building Code, Chapter 17, that have critical life-safety and structural-safety roles:

- Inspection of fabricators
- Concrete construction
- Masonry construction
- Steel construction
- Wood construction
- Soils
- Pile foundations
- Smoke control
- Wind requirements
- Pier foundations
- Vertical masonry elements
- Sprayed fire-resistant materials
- Mastic and intumescent fire-resistant coatings
- Exterior insulation and finish systems
- Special cases
- Seismic requirements

The accreditation can also cover additional areas, as requested by the Jurisdiction.

Does accreditation cover both the inspectors and the inspection agency?

Yes. While IAS accreditation is issued to the special inspection agency, it also includes an assessment of the inspector performance, qualifications, training and experience. The agency is assessed based on requirements in *IBC Section 1703 Approvals and IAS AC291*, to ensure it is independent with no conflicts of interest, that it has adequate equipment, procedures for conducting inspections and report writing, handling complaints, etc.

What are examples of things IAS assessments have found?

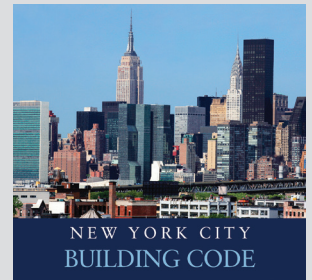
- Lack of daily reports
- Workmanship being performed without oversight (continuous inspection required)
- No nonconformance logs
- Welding in lieu of bolting
- No verification of welder certifications
- No fireproofing inspections
- Certificate of conformance for bolt and weld electrode (traceability)
- Material test report for steel (traceability)
- Improper tie-ins before concrete pour; lack of consolidation
- Improper or lack of equipment at job sites

What does it cost Building Departments to use the program?

There is no cost for building departments to use the IAS Special Inspection Agency Accreditation Program.

New York City Requires Accreditation

In 2013, the New York City Department of Buildings (NYCDOB) started requiring special inspection accreditation for agencies that perform work in a Class 1 category. The Class 1 category may conduct inspections on any project. Agencies that are not accredited are not allowed to inspect major buildings. IAS worked with the NYCDOB to create and rollout the special inspection agency accreditation program.



Language in the NYCDOB Special Inspection Program states:

“Special Inspection Agencies must obtain accreditation for all Class 1 inspections. Class 1 Special Inspection Agencies must be accredited by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS) or an equivalent accreditation agency....”

San Luis Obispo County (California) Accepts IAS Accreditation

The County of San Luis Obispo (California) Department of Planning and Building program for approving special inspections includes IAS Special Inspection Agency Accreditation as an option.

Language in the County of San Luis Obispo Department’s Special Inspection Program states:



“...the agency may consider the International Accreditation Service (IAS) Special Inspection Agency Accreditation Program. The program requires special inspection agencies to operate under a quality management system that is documented in a manual, and also requires the agency to be assessed in the field to determine if it is competent to perform specific inspections or types of inspections. IAS accreditation is based on the assessment of a special inspection agency’s inspection procedures, the competence of its inspection staff, and its reporting procedures.”

Ten Reasons to Begin using IAS Accreditation to Approve Special Inspection Agencies

- 1. Improves Safety** – Provides a proven program for continuous inspection of critical work to ensure construction complies with the code.
- 2. Ensures Code Compliance** – IAS provides a stringent process to determine if SIAs comply with Chapter 17 of the International Building Code®.
- 3. Saves Time** – IAS takes the burden off the building department to make sure that SIA's are regularly assessed for quality and competence.
- 4. Standardizes Assessments** – All SIAs are evaluated using the same criteria and assessment process, creating a level playing field for everyone.
- 5. Limits Liability** – Requiring SIAs to be accredited by IAS provides evidence of due diligence to ensure the competence of such agencies.
- 6. Easy to Use** – Building departments can access a list of IAS accredited SIAs on the IAS web site.
- 7. Saves Money** – There is no cost to building departments that participate in the IAS SIA Approval Program.
- 8. Provides Code Official Oversight** – All IAS accreditation programs include oversight by the IAS Accreditation Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Board of Directors that include code official members.
- 9. Program Transparency** – The accreditation program was developed and is maintained in open and public accreditation committee meetings.
- 10. Benefits Designers, Contractors and Building Owners** – Provides assurance for all parties involved in the project that an accredited special inspection agency is available onsite. This will aid in facilitating communication, minimizing misinterpretation, ensuring the intended structural design and building code provisions are being implemented, and helping construction stay on schedule.

Clark County, Nevada Supports IAS Accreditation



“The International Building Code (IBC) requires you to have special inspections. The IAS accreditation requirements for special inspection agencies almost mirror the special inspection requirements in IBC Chapter 17. The IAS program covers all the qualifications, the necessary steps and procedures that we need to approve the agencies. That’s one of the main reasons why we like the IAS program. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel if someone is IAS accredited. The accreditation program, including your ICC certified inspectors, helps you ensure that the buildings in your community are safe and sound. The IAS accreditation program is very easy to use and serves as an extension of our department.”

Sam Palmer, P.E., CBO

Assistant Director, Clark County Nevada Department of Building & Fire Safety Prevention

How to verify if a Special Inspection Agency is Accredited?

To verify if a company is accredited by IAS, look for their Special Inspection Agency's Certificate and Scope of Accreditation on the IAS website. Here's how:

1. Go to www.iasonline.org
2. Click on "Find Accredited Organization" on the top, right side of the home page
3. Enter the agency name or accreditation number or accreditation program, and Search
4. Click to View Certificate



Is an Accredited Special Inspection Agency qualified to do all special inspections?

Not necessarily. It is important to read their Scope of Accreditation, which can be found on the IAS website. The scope will identify what areas the agency has been assessed for and included accredited scope.

About IAS

IAS is a nonprofit subsidiary of the International Code Council (ICC) and a globally recognized accreditation body.

Learn more about using IAS to help your department approve special inspection agencies

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IAS is a subsidiary of the ICC

