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# Specifications Overview

**Design Manual**  
**Chapter 120**  
**Specifications**

Originally Issued: 01-29-10

Revised: 06-12-18

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Specifications are detailed statements describing materials, dimensions, and quality of work for something to be built, installed, or manufactured. At the Iowa DOT, the Specifications Section of the Statewide Operations Bureau manages the specification development process. Additionally, all changes to the specifications (with the exception of Special Provisions) are decided by the Specification Committee (spec committee). This committee consists of representatives from FHWA, local governments, and the offices of the Highway Division within the DOT. For more information on the Specification Committee, refer to PPM 600.02.

Requests for specification changes (with the exception of Special Provisions) must be submitted to the spec committee by a current member. The Office of Design's representative to the spec committee is the [Methods Engineer](#).

Listed below are the types of specifications used at the Iowa DOT. The specifications are listed in an increasing order of precedence, shifting from general in nature to more project-specific. For example, a requirement in a Developmental Specification would override a similar requirement in a Supplemental Specification; and a related requirement in a Special Provision would override them both. Typically, Special Provisions are written to address issues on specific projects, whereas the other types of specifications become increasingly generic as you move up the list. For a complete listing of the hierarchy for all contract documents, refer to [Article 1105.04](#) of the Standard Specifications.

## Standard Specifications (spec book)

The Standard Specifications are published in book form. The Specifications Section determines when a new book is published. The current publication is available online at <https://www.iowadot.gov/erl/current/GS/Navigation/nav.htm>. Between printings, the spec book is updated through the issuance of General Supplemental Specifications.

## General Supplemental Specifications (GS)

GSs are 8½" x 11" bound booklets containing revisions to the spec book. GSs are published twice a year to coincide with the April and October bid lettings. Each new GS replaces the previous one, and incorporates the changes from all previous GSs. Therefore, a designer needs only refer to the newest GS in order to find the most accurate information.

A searchable version of the spec book, with all its GS updates incorporated, is also available in the Electronic Reference Library (ERL), located online at <https://www.iowadot.gov/erl/current/GS/Navigation/nav.htm>.

## Supplemental Specifications (SS)

SSs are specifications that either: modify the requirements for work covered in the spec book, or describe requirements for work not covered in the spec book. SSs are typically linked to specific bid items, and the Office of Contracts automatically assigns an SS to a project when one of that project's bid items are used. Supplemental Specifications are normally incorporated into the spec book at its next publication.

## **Developmental Specifications (DS)**

DSs are a hybrid of SSs and SPs. They are reusable, but will be assigned to specific projects. If a DS is modified, it will be assigned a new number. Most DSs require the approval of a controller before they can be assigned to a project. When a DS is required on a project, the designer should follow the procedures outlined in Section [120A-2](#).

## **Special Provisions (SP)**

SPs are specifications for work items applicable to a specific project or group of projects. SPs are written by the designer and submitted to the Specifications Section as outlined in Section [120A-3](#). Some SPs are drafted by the Specifications Section. SPs override any information shown in the plans.

# Chronology of Changes to Design Manual Section:

## 120A-001 Specifications Overview

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| 6/12/2018 | Revised<br>Corrected header and fixed broken hyperlinks.  |
| 2/10/2012 | Revised<br>Added hyperlink to Methods Engineer. Added that some SPs are drafted by the Specifications Section.<br>Removed that SPs do not require approval by the spec committee. |
| 7/12/2010 | Revised<br>Updated hyperlinks.  |