

# Certification Program Requirements for Fabricator and Manufacturer of Corrugated Metal Pipe

## Scope

This document (hereinafter referred to as the *Requirements*) governs the National Corrugated Steel Pipe Association (NCSPA) Certification Programs. All Applicants and continuing Participants are required to have available and comply with these *Requirements*. An Applicant is a company that is requesting certification for a facility that does not hold a current NCSPA certification and a Participant is a company that holds a current NCSPA certification and is seeking to continue the certification at that facility.

## Certification Programs

NCSPA offers and issues certifications for the metal pipe industry. It also offers endorsements which can be added to the certification scope. The certification programs are described in Section 1.

### Section 1 General Requirements

- PR1.1 **Certification Program for Fabricators of Corrugated Metal Pipe** which applies to Fabricators, who fabricate and supply, corrugated metal pipe and pipe arch for the highway, railroad and infrastructure construction users. Applicants and Participants of this program are required to adhere to these *Requirements*.
- PR1.2 **Certification Program for Manufacturers of Coil Steel for Corrugated Steel Pipe** which applies to Steel Coil Manufacturers, who provide coated steel coils to the fabricators of corrugated steel pipe. Applicants and Participants of this program are required to adhere to these *Requirements*.
- PR1.3 The NCSPA *Certification Standard for Corrugated Metal Pipe Fabrication, Manufacture and Coating — 2019* (hereinafter referred to as *Standard*) is the primary normative document for all Certification Programs. Whenever there is a conflict between the *Requirements* and the *Standard* the *Requirements* govern.
- PR1.4 *Requirements* and *Supplements* are included in the site audit scope and a nonconformance would result in a Corrective Action Request being issued by the auditor.
- PR1.5 Falsification of records or attempts to influence an auditor or the certification process in any manner by employees or other representatives of the Participant or Applicant deemed to be a fraud or attempted fraud on the certification process is not permitted. If this occurs at any time during the application or renewal process prior to a final determination by the Certification Board (CB), the certification process will be suspended and the case referred to the CB for determination. Any existing certifications remain valid until the CB has made its determination.
- PR1.6 The Fee Schedules are provided at [www.NCSPA.org/certification](http://www.NCSPA.org/certification) and are subject to change.

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## Section 2 Applying for certification (for Applicants, Participants refer to Section 8 Scope Changes)

- PR2.1 Application begins by submitting the online application. Within the following 10 days, applicants must then submit the completed Prerequisites checklist along with the documents required for the applicable certification program(s). Full payment must be received before the application will be reviewed.
- PR2.2 An eligibility review is the first step in the application review process. This review will confirm that the applicant meets the necessary prerequisites for certification. If an Applicant does not meet the requirements of the application and eligibility review process, the original payment less the Application Review Fee will be refunded and the application process will be terminated.
- PR2.3 Initial audits for applicants are performed in two stages. Stage 1 is a Documentation Audit of the applicant's QMS. After Stage 1 is satisfactorily completed, the Stage 2 (Site Audit) will be scheduled. All Stage 1 reviews follow the process in Section 3.
- PR2.4 Following the successful completion of a Stage 1 document audit, the Stage 2 site audit must be completed within 1 year. If the Stage 2 site audit does not occur within 1 year, the application will be terminated and the application fee will not be refunded.
- PR2.5 If the applicant cannot complete the Stage 1 document audit in the allotted time, the Stage 1 process will be terminated and the application fee refunded less the Documentation Audit Fee. The applicant must wait at least 3 months before reapplying.
- PR2.6 Applicants with multiple facilities may be provided a pricing reduction for application and performance of the Stage 1 audit based on a Multi-Site Scheme if all of the following conditions are met:
- The sites utilize the same quality management system,
  - All locations to be included in the certification program are listed in the scope of the quality manual,
  - and the management review, nonconformance, corrective action and internal audit processes are centrally administered and includes all sites listed in the scope of the quality manual.

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## Section 3 Document Audit - Stage 1 (required for Applicants)

- PR3.1 Following the first review of the Stage 1 or other document audit, an Applicant will be issued a Stage 1 Nonconformance Report (SNR). All nonconformance noted must be responded to within 30 days of receipt or the Stage 1 process will be terminated and the application fee refunded less the Documentation Audit Fee.
- PR3.2 If revised SNR are issued, they must be responded to within 15 days of receipt or the Stage 1 process will be terminated and the application fee refunded less the Documentation Audit Fee.
- PR3.3 The resolution process for the SNR will continue for up to 90 days after the date of the initial SNR. If the Stage 1 audit is not completed within 90 days, then the process will be discontinued and the application fee refunded, less the Documentation Audit Fee. If the application is terminated, the applicant may re-apply at any time.
- PR3.4 All documents required for the Stage 1 document audit shall be submitted in English.

## Section 4 Planning for the Site Audit

- PR4.1 The current fee schedule is posted on the NCSPA website and is subject to change. Payment of applicable fees are required before the site audit can be performed.
- PR4.2 Applicants and Participants are eligible to apply for as many NCSPA certifications as provided by these *Requirements*. Separate certificates are issued for fabricator and manufacturer programs and require separate applications, documentation audits and site audits. Refer to Section 8 to add programs to an existing certificate or see Section 2 if not currently certified.
- PR4.3 The Participant/Applicant will be notified of the assigned audit date via email. Any requests to reschedule a site audit will be assessed the Rescheduled Site Audit Fee.
- PR4.4 Any requests from NCSPA to confirm the site audit date must be responded to within the prescribed timeframe or the audit may be cancelled and the Rescheduled Site Audit Fee will be assessed.
- PR4.5 When rescheduling occurs, the site audit must be completed a minimum of 45 days prior the expiration of the certificate to avoid the expiration of the certificate before a renewal is issued.
- PR4.6 NCSPA reserves the right to reschedule a site audit due to circumstances beyond their control (i.e. weather, flight cancellations, political environment changes, unexpected auditor unavailability, etc.). If this occurs, no rescheduling fees will be assessed and every attempt will be made to reschedule the audit as soon as possible.
- PR4.7 A three-year Certification Cycle consists of the following phases:
- Initial Certification (RN) or a Full Certification Renewal (RF)
  - First Certification Renewal (R1)
  - Second Certification Renewal (R2)

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- PR4.8 A quality manual, documented procedures and records shall be made available upon request of NCSPA and provided in English.
- PR4.9 Key certification variables include company information and contact information. Failure to provide timely notification of changes to key certification variables may result in a cancelled or incomplete site audit or suspension of certification. Changes in ownership, location and company name may require additional audits. Therefore the Participant is required, within 30 days of the change, to complete the *Update Key Variables* form on the NCSPA website to inform NCSPA of changes to any of the following:

Facility: Company name, physical address of facility, mailing address, and ownership

Contacts: The names, telephone, and email of the following designated individuals

- Principal Officer
- Marketing Representative
- Certification Contact or Management Representative (may be the same person)
- Accounts Payable

While positions identified above may be combined, a minimum of TWO unique email addresses for two DIFFERENT employees is required to ensure proper communication. The Participant's continued certification is at risk if proper email addresses are not provided.

- PR4.10 Applicants must submit the record of the internal audit and management review as part of the application process. For Participants seeking renewal of certification, the internal audit must include all required certification programs. The internal audit and management review must be completed at least 30 days prior to the site audit. Records of the internal audit and management review must include evidence of the audit results, when these activities took place, the person(s) performing the audit/review and evidence that all applicable certification programs and endorsements were audited. Participants may perform a single audit or perform several audits throughout the year, as long as, all applicable certification programs and endorsements are audited.
- PR4.11 The designated Management Representative may perform the entire internal audit. It is preferred to use other personnel to perform the internal audit so that independence from the function being audited can be maintained.

### Section 5 During the Site Audit

- PR5.1 To ensure that the audit maintains impartiality and avoids any conflicts of interest, Participants/Applicants cannot have used the auditor assigned to them as a consultant in the two years prior to the audit date nor can the auditor have been an employee of or contracted by the Participant/Applicant within the previous five years. If either conflict of interest exists with the assigned auditor, the Participant/Applicant is obligated to notify NCSPA Certification within 5 business days of receiving their auditor assignment, and the audit will be reassigned to a different auditor at no expense to the Participant/Applicant. If notification is not received within this time frame, the audit reassignment will be at the Participant/Applicant's expense.

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PR5.2 All correspondence, discussions and interviews will be conducted directly with or in the presence of the Participant/Applicant's designated representative (normally the management representative or certification contact). Consultants may be present during the site audit as an observer but they cannot participate in the audit nor can they be named as a designated representative.

Consultants include those who have participated in the establishment and implementation of the quality management system through activities such as preparing/producing manuals and procedures or who give specific advice, instruction or solutions towards development and implementation of the quality management system. Consultants that are under contract to provide specific services such as safety management, NDE inspection, translators, etc may participate during the site audit as directed by the auditor.

PR5.3 Observers may be present during the site audit but shall not participate in or influence the audit process or the outcome of the audit, as determined by the auditor. At the auditor's discretion, observers may be asked to leave the audit. Noncompliance will result in the audit being suspended and an Additional Site Audit Fee will be assessed to conclude the audit later.

PR5.4 NCSPA retains the right to send observers to any site audit for the purpose of monitoring program compliance, internal audits or third party audits. NCSPA will provide advance notification of the observer and their purpose of the observation to the Participant/Applicant.

PR5.5 Interpreters must be provided by the Participant/Applicant for the auditor's communication during the site audit, as necessary. Interpreters must be knowledgeable of the appropriate industry terminology.

PR5.6 All personnel involved in the quality management system may be either employees of or contracted by the Participant/Applicant. In the case of the latter, contract status and qualifications must be demonstrable.

PR5.7 During the site audit, the auditor will identify and document in the Site Audit Findings report four types of audit findings. These audit findings and the needed action for each is:

- **Identified Strengths** - These are written to summarize a participant's abilities to meet or exceed conformance to the Site Audit Scope. They may include functions or processes that could represent a unique ability or potential competitive advantage. These are to be reviewed during the management review meeting and no action is required.
- **Opportunities for Improvement** – these are suggestions or opinions based on the auditor's experience that could add-value to the quality management system or the erector's safety management systems. These are to be reviewed during the management review meeting and no action is required.
- **Nonconformance** – the Participant SHALL engage their Quality Management System to review, evaluate and implement an internal documented corrective action for the items listed. Nonconformance will be reviewed at the next site audit for effective implementation. Any found to be not effectively implemented will be viewed as a breakdown of the Quality Management System and a NCSPA Corrective Action Request will be issued.
- **Corrective Action Request** - See Section 6 below.

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## Section 6 Corrective Action Process

- PR6.1 An auditor may issue Corrective Action Requests (CARs) for nonconformities during the site audit. If so, the Participant/Applicant has 30 calendar days from the last day of the site audit to respond to each CAR. Each response must include the completed CAR form which contains:
- Actions to immediately correct or contain the nonconformance
  - Root cause analysis
  - Actions taken to correct root cause and prevent recurrence
  - Supporting evidence files that verify the planned actions have been implemented
- PR6.2 The CAR response will be reviewed. The reviewer may make a request for more information, in which case, the Participant/Applicant has 14 days to respond. The reviewer may make a second request for more information, in which case, the Participant/Applicant has 7 days to respond. Failure to respond to a CAR within the stated timeframes will result in the review being marked “incomplete” prior to being forwarded to the NCSPA CB. All reviews of corrective action, whether complete or incomplete, are forwarded to CB.
- PR6.3 If the Participant/Applicant chooses to dispute the issuance of a CAR, a challenge may be submitted by emailing [certification@NCSPA.org](mailto:certification@NCSPA.org) with the reason(s) for the challenge within 30 days of the conclusion of the site audit. The Participant/Applicant will then be contacted concerning the challenge and an investigation will follow. The investigation concludes with a decision on the challenge and the Participant/Applicant will be advised of the results and any additional actions needed.
- PR6.4 All documents required for the corrective action process, including evidence, shall be submitted in English.

## Section 7 Certification Decisions

- PR7.1 After each site audit is completed and any corrective action requests has been reviewed, the results will be forwarded to the CB. The CB will also be provided with the prior three year certification history and audit findings, and any complaints or allegations that have been received by NCSPA, to review as part of the basis for determining certification.
- PR7.2 NCSPA reserves the right to deny/reduce/suspend/withdraw certification to a Participant/Applicant who fails to provide objective evidence of the ability to satisfy these *Requirements*.
- PR7.3 NCSPA may choose to grant certification for less than one year if it is determined that an additional site audit is needed to provide evidence of an effective quality management system. When this occurs, any associated costs will be assessed according to the current fee schedule for the Additional Site Audit. No additional scope(s) will be considered in this site audit. NCSPA also reserves the right to conduct short-notice or unannounced audits, if required.



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- PR7.4 NCSPA will make information concerning certification status publically available on its website. The information disclosed is: company name, location, contact name, email and phone number, certifications held, and status of certification.
- PR7.5 Participants that hold a current valid certificate are eligible to use and display the Certified Fabricator/Manufacturer logo, as applicable.
- PR7.6 All approved certifications are included on a single certificate.
- PR7.8 The Certificate contains the following information:
- Name of the company holding the certification
  - Address of the certified facility which is the address where the site audit occurs
  - Listing of the certifications held
  - Year and Month the certification expires
  - Date of certificate issuance
  - Signature of NCSPA officer
  - Unique identification number

Certificates are non-transferable and only one facility address will be listed on a certificate. IN the case of companies which meet the requirements for multi-site certifications then a single certificate with additional pages, as needed, will list all sites included in the certification. See PR2.6.

### Section 8 Making changes to the Certification Scope (for Participants changing a current certificate)

- PR8.1 A participant may request changes to their certification.
- Adding to the scope of certification - Participant must complete the NCSPA Certification Scope Change Application.
  - Reducing the scope of certification - the Participant may reduce scope prior to or during the site audit.
  - Cancelling certification - the Participant may withdraw certification by completing a Certification Withdrawal Request.
- PR8.2 Changes to the certification scope may require additional submittals, document audits, site audits and fees. All scope change requests shall be submitted to NCSPA for review.
- PR8.3 Scope Change Requests received at least 180 days prior to the certificate expiration may be included in the next regularly scheduled certification renewal audit (site audit), as long as, all prerequisites, document reviews and payments are completed at least 60 days prior to the next scheduled site audit. Additional fees will be applied for scope changes that are requested to be completed prior to the next site audit.