



Second Audit Feedback Information Report, for those audits conducted and completed during the period December 2007 to the end of July 2009.

By the end of July 2009 SER had conducted and completed a total of 180 Approved Body audits and 309 Approved Certifier audits. For 150 Approved Body audits and 183 Approved Certifier audits it was found that a follow up audit was not considered necessary.

The SER Scheme continues to drive up standards of public safety with respect to the structural design of buildings in Scotland and there is seen to be continuing uptake by clients to use the scheme for their building warrant applications.

In December 2008 SER was audited for the third time by The Scottish Government Building Standards Division (BSD) and “Membership Auditing Procedures” was one of five activities included in the audit. The BSD audit resulted in a classification of “Excellent” for auditing activities.

Introduction

This second report has been prepared to provide information regarding the most common findings that have been found from the audit process since the first report was published in February 2008 and to make a comparison with the results of the first audit feedback report.

A further 136 Approved Body audits and 249 Approved Certifier audits were conducted and completed between December 2007 and July 2009 and the findings arising from these audits are summarised in the Appendix to this report. The most common non-conformances are highlighted.

As was the case during the period reported in the first report a small number of Approved Bodies and Approved Certifiers have been suspended as the result of poor audit findings. The majority of those who have been suspended have been able to satisfy SER that they have made satisfactory modifications to their procedures and have had their suspension lifted and a follow-up audit scheduled.

Audit findings – Approved Certifiers

From the Approved Certifier audits the following audit criteria had the most non-conformances:

- 1- Item ref. P1E Use of Contractor Designed Details Option (1)
- 2- Item ref. P1A Scope of Certification (4)

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3- Item ref. P1C Project Records	(6)
4- Item ref. P4F Superstructure	(7)
5- Item ref. P5A Cladding System (including glazing)	(15)
6- Item ref. P6C Protective Barriers	(5)

(Figures in brackets show the results in the first feedback report)

It can be seen that 4 of the top 6 findings were also in the top 6 findings in the first audit feedback report.

In order to provide further guidance on certifying protective barriers SER issued Technical Bulletin Number 5 Certifying the Structural Design of Protective Barriers in July 2009.

A further Technical Bulletin is in preparation to assist in certifying cladding and glazing.

There have been improvements in the findings for around half of the auditable items, notably P3A Ground Investigation Reports, P3B Existing Building Condition Assessment, P4A Mineral Consolidation and P7A Structural Materials (specification). However for 10 of the items there has been a marked reduction in standard. These are:

- P1A Scope of Certification
- P1B Certification Plan
- P1C Project Records
- P2B Overall Stability
- P4F Superstructure
- P5A Cladding System (including glazing)
- P5B Fixings and Supports
- P5C Movement Joints (building envelope)
- P6A Ties and connections
- P6B Internal (non load bearing) Partitions

Several of the above bullet points relate to fixings. Approved Certifiers should be aware that this is an area of concern for SCOSS who issued an alert in September 2008 on the subject of selection and installation of fixings (available for download from <http://www.scoss.org.uk/publications/rtf/SCO8048A-Alert%20-Fixings-Final.pdf>.)

Approved Certifiers are urged to pay particular attention to all of the above items and the associated sections of the audit procedures.

The findings for item ref. P1A Scope of Certification covered a fairly wide range of non conformance descriptions, the most common were:

- No proper check list for determining the scope of certification.
- Some structural elements not included in the scope of certification. Common examples are stairs, balustrades, glazing and steel connections.
- The design of conservatories not included in the certification process.

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- Independent check not carried out to suit the risk category.
- Some contractor designed details not shown on schedule 1.
- Contractor designed timber frame kits incorrectly included in schedule 1.
- No calculations in file for some schedule 1 items on completed projects.
- For staged certificates the schedule 1 and 2 items should only be those relevant to that stage.
- Incorrect selection of certification options used in schedule 2.
- Reports omitted from schedule 2.
- Lack of Conversion or Alteration/Extension certificate on projects where both are required.
- Amendment to warrant certificates not issued when required.
- Lack of adequate description and detail for some structural items.

Approved Certifiers will find guidance on these issues in the Technical Bulletins and Guidance Notes.

The findings for item ref. P4F Superstructure also covered a fairly wide range of non conformance descriptions, the most common were:

- Inconsistency between calculations and warrant drawings
- Insufficient calculations and insufficient details on warrant drawings
- No assessment or consideration of wind loading
- Heavy reliance on Architects' drawings, marked up drawings not in project file
- Insufficient checked calculations for timber frame structures
- No checked calculations in file for subcontractor designed elements
- No checked calculations in file for some minor structural elements

Approved Certifiers should be aware that the design of a whole building structure is being certified and design calculations and warrant drawings should therefore be complete.

Audit Findings – Approved Bodies

From the Approved Body audits the following audit criteria had the most non-conformances:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1- Item ref. AB1B Quality and Checking Procedures | (1) |
| 2- Item ref. AB2B Management of Risk | (2) |
| 3- Item ref. AB1D Training | (3) |
| 4- Item ref AB2A Protection of Certifiers from Financial Loss | (4) |

(Figures in brackets show the results in the first feedback report)

SER is particularly disappointed that there has been a significant increase in the level of non-conformances related to almost all of the items listed above. All Approved Bodies should review the relevant sections of the Scheme Guide, Technical Bulletin 2 and Guidance Note 6.

Follow-up Audits

Included in the statistics presented in the Appendix are the findings from the follow up audits of 5 Approved Bodies and 22 Approved Certifiers. Whilst the majority of those who have been subject to a follow-up audit have brought their certification practice in line with the Scheme's requirements it is disappointing to have to report that a significant minority have not done so and require a further audit.

Audit Feedback Questionnaire

In January 2009 all those who had been audited up to that point were contacted by e-mail and asked to complete an on-line audit feedback questionnaire. Since then requests to complete the questionnaire have been sent to Scheme members shortly after their audit outcome letter has been issued. SER would encourage all those who are audited to respond to the questionnaire when invited to do so.

Responses to the questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of Scheme members are in agreement with the principles underpinning the audit programme and are content with SER's documentation, audit methodology and the conduct of their audit.

A number of very useful comments have been made in responses to the questionnaire. The most common include requests for:

- Audit findings to be cross referenced to particular projects/certificates
- A reduction in the time taken for audit reports to be processed and the outcome letters issued
- Consideration being given to a separate audit checklist for small projects

All auditors have been asked to action the first point. Steps are being taken to make sure audit reports are processed as quickly as possible. However, it should be remembered that they have to be considered at meetings of both the Scottish Registration Board and the Board of Directors before outcome letters can be issued.

Audit Procedures

A revision to the *Procedures for Auditing the Activities of Approved Bodies and Approved Certifiers* is in preparation. This will take account of the lessons that have been learnt by the audit teams from conducting audits and feedback from the questionnaire.

Conclusions

On the basis of the audits conducted to date SER is satisfied that the vast majority of Approved Certifiers and Approved Bodies are doing a good job and that the public can have confidence that the Scheme is delivering improved levels of safety. Most of the items that are identified in this report as being deficient, whilst important, relate to secondary structure or low risk situations.

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APPENDIX

Summary of audit non-conformance findings in the period December 2007 to July 2009. The figures below are the result of 249 Approved Certifier audits and 136 Approved Body audits. N/C = Non-Conformance

Certifier N/C's	Description of Approved Certifier Audit Criteria	No. of N/C's	% Finding rate	Previous % Finding rate
AC1A	Understanding of Scope of the Certification Process	4	1.61	5.00
AC1B	Operating within the limits of declared competence	0	0	1.67
P1A	Scope of Certification	135	54.22	38.33
P1B	Certification Plan	78	31.33	23.33
P1C	Project Records	133	53.41	31.67
P1D	Programming of Work	42	16.87	20.00
P1E	Use of Contractor Designed Details Option	137	55.02	46.67
P2A	Loading Assessment	52	20.88	15.00
P2B	Overall Stability	58	23.29	11.67
P2C	Disproportionate Collapse	53	21.29	25.00
P2D	Conversions	7	2.81	3.33
P2E	Structural Movement Joints	0	0	0
P3A	Ground Investigation Reports	70	28.11	40.00
P3B	Existing Building Condition Assessment	87	34.94	41.67
P4A	Mineral Consolidation	23	9.24	15.00
P4B	Sub-Structure (excluding Piling)	41	16.47	18.33
P4C	Piling	3	1.20	5.00
P4D	Earth Retaining Structures	15	6.02	6.67
P4E	Ground Improvement	4	1.61	0
P4F	Superstructure	104	41.77	30.00
P5A	Cladding System (including glazing)	102	40.96	16.67
P5B	Fixings and Supports	55	22.09	11.67
P5C	Movement Joints (building envelope)	47	18.88	10.00
P6A	Ties and Connections	70	28.11	20.00
P6B	Internal (non-load bearing) Partitions	47	18.88	5.00
P6C	Protective Barriers	92	36.95	38.33
P7A	Structural Materials (specification)	37	14.86	20.00
P7B	Structural Components (specification)	17	6.83	8.33
P7C	Structural Fixings (specification)	38	15.26	13.33
P8A	Elements of Structure-fire protection	67	26.91	16.67
P8B	Single Storey Steel Portal Framed Buildings/ fire boundary condition	11	4.42	3.33

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Body N/C's	Description of Approved Body Audit Criteria	No. of N/C's	% Finding rate	Previous % Finding rate
AB1A	Appointment of Certification coordinator	12	8.82	11.36
AB1B	Quality and Checking Procedures	63	46.32	27.27
AB1C	Access to Information	9	6.62	6.82
AB1D	Training	47	34.56	20.45
AB1E	Insurance	2	1.47	0
ABIF	Employment	0	0	0
AB2A	Protection of Certifiers from Financial Loss (not required for sole practitioners)	24	17.65	15.91
AB2B	Management of Risk	51	37.50	27.27

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