APPLY PREPARE TEST & INSPECT CERTIFY

CERTIFICATION IN FOUR SIMPLE STEPS!

APA CERTIFICATION PROGRAM GUIDE

APA CERTIFIED PLANT

Thank you for your interest in the APA Certification program! This guide will help lead you through the certification process.

WHY BECOME CERTIFIED?

Architectural Precast Concrete has grown in popularity because of its economy, flexibility, durability, sustainability, and universal availability. A highly specialized industry has developed, which requires an equally specialized system of quality control procedures. **The APA Plant Certification Program provides architects with added assurance that their chosen architectural precast facility has in place an independently monitored quality control system, which includes thorough and regular concrete testing.**

Architects, engineers, and governmental agencies nationwide have welcomed the program as a standard of quality precast concrete production. The American Institute of Architects' Master Spec®, Speclink®, 4-Specs® recognize APA Certification and the program is incorporated into the Unified Facility Guide Specification (UFGS) used by all the armed forces and NASA.

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BENEFITS INCLUDE:

Quality Assurance – Specifiers can be confident they are working with a producer that meets standards for quality precast products.

Continuing Education Provider Programs – The APA is proud to support the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Continuing Education System and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Continuing Education System. The APA currently has two Continuing Education Programs available: the Building Your Vision Seminar Series PowerPoint presentation and a Production Facility tour. Take advantage of these great opportunities to share the benefits of using architectural precast concrete products while building professional relationships with your local design community.

Continuing Education & Networking Events – Each plant receives one complimentary registration to the APA Annual Convention and discounted rates to other yearly meetings & events. Learn from and share with your colleagues.

Access to the *Precaster*, APA's Quarterly e-magazine containing timely industry trends and certification updates; and information on specialized training opportunities.

Awards for Excellence Program – Each year, the Architectural Precast Association (APA) conducts its Awards for Excellence program, which recognizes excellence in design, manufacturing and craftsmanship of architectural precast concrete structures and individual components.

HR & Employment Hotline – Certified plants have unlimited access to a complementary HR & Employment Hotline through APA's partnership with Seay Management Consultants. They provide answers to your human resources, personnel management and employment related questions.

Cost Saving Programs – APA members can save on office supplies with APA's discount through Office Depot and save on shipping through UPS!

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Just follow the four easy steps

APPLY | PREPARE | TEST & INSPECT | CERTIFY

STEP 1: APPLY

- Complete the Producer Membership Application and pay the one-time application fee of $3,500.*

  (Please note that the one-time application fee covers the cost of your preliminary inspection, Quality Control Manual review and required APA administered personnel testing.)

- The APA Board of Directors votes to approve initial applications and APA staff will notify the producer when/if an application is approved to begin the certification process.

**There are additional fees for plants outside the continental U.S., please contact the APA offices for details.*

STEP 2: PREPARE

To become certified, you will need:

- Approval of your Quality Control (QC) Manual
- To pass an initial plant inspection
- Also, some non-APA certifications will be needed such as ACI Concrete Field Testing Technician - Grade I (required – except for GFRC-only plants) and Concrete Strength Testing Technician (optional – required if testing is done in-house). These certifications are issued by the American Concrete Institute. In addition, welders must be certified by the American Welding Society.

A) Quality Control (QC) Manual

1. A QC manual template is sent to plant.
2. Plant prepares its own QC manual.
3. Plant submits QC manual for review.
4. QC manual is approved by APA.

(NOTE: QC manual approval can sometimes take prospective members several weeks to complete and amend, so you are encouraged to start this as soon as possible).

B) Prepare for Inspection

1. APA coordinates a date for your inspection.
2. APA sends a preparatory checklist for your first inspection.
3. Plant prepares for the inspection.

C) Prepare for Tests

1. Staff seeking APA certifications review the handbook and submit registration forms.
2. Upon receiving registration forms the APA sends study guides to appropriate staff.

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STEP 3: TEST & INSPECT

- Once testing registration forms are submitted to the APA and entered into the APA's online testing platform, candidates will receive an e-mail notification and have 30 days to sit for exams. One free retake is offered for those who do not pass an exam (they have 10 days to retake the exam).
- Those seeking Level II QC Manager status must first pass the Level I QC Technician Exam. It can take 7-10 days to obtain testing results, so please plan the timing of your testing accordingly.
- Personnel testing should be completed prior to scheduling your initial inspection.
- Inspector arrives at plant and goes through a checklist of mandatory and other items.

STEP 4: CERTIFY

- You will receive notification of your inspection and exam results. Upon confirmation, APA will send an electronic invoice for fees (prorated from date of application approval).

- A packet of information containing your plant's certification certificate and plaque will be mailed to you and your company name will be added to the APA website.

LET'S RECAP!

To become certified, you will need the following:

- Approved QC Manual
- Level I QC Technician, Level II QC Manager, and Batch Plant Operator certification tests must be passed
- Initial plant inspection must be passed

Other needed non-APA certifications:

- ACI Concrete Field Testing Technician - Grade I (required except for GFRC-only plants)
- ACI Concrete Strength Testing (optional – required if testing is done in-house)
- AWS certification obtained for welders.

HOW LONG DOES CERTIFICATION TAKE?

- Once a producer member's application has been approved by the APA Board, **the soonest a plant can be certified is 90 days after the application has been submitted.**

- Once a producer member's application has been approved by the APA Board, the plant has **90 days** to submit their Quality Control Manual and schedule their exams for Batch Plant Operators and Quality Control Technicians.

- Testing of staff and the plant inspection should occur **no later than 180 days** after an application has been approved.

(NOTE: Failure to meet the 90-day deadline may result in a plant forfeiting their application fee and require the submission of a new application and testing fee.)

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

- There is a one-time application fee of $3,500*. The fee covers the cost of your Quality Control Manual review, preliminary inspection and required testing.

** Fees are higher for plants outside the continental U.S., please contact the APA offices for details.*

- Once the certification process is completed, plants that pass will receive an invoice with prorated fees. Fees are based on dollar volume of sales of member companies. If a company has multiple plants; each plant must be separately certified and inspecetd. Dollar volume relates to sales F.O.B. plant(s). Fees include two plant certification inspections per year.

Gross Sales	2027 Annual Fee
Producer companies with gross sales less than $3,000,000	$8,200.00
Producer companies with gross sales over $3,000,000 and less than $8,000,000	$8,975.00
Producer companies with gross sales over $8,000,000	$10,050.00

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are there sample tests for my employees?
There are no sample tests for your employees, but you will be sent testing manuals for your staff to study from. Two of the tests will be timed and “open book”, so employees can utilize available resources just as they would while on the job.

I’m a little fuzzy on the testing portion. How does that work?
Exams are administered during your first inspection. You are provided up to four tests at no charge, if you want to have additional staff tested the fee is $325 per test. A single person can hold all three designations, but you are encouraged to have multiple people take the exams to act as backups.

How are the inspectors chosen?
In order to maintain the integrity of the APA Plant Certification program, the APA contracts with an independent third-party to conduct plant audits. The APA uses Pennoni, a national, multi-disciplinary engineering firm with experience in auditing concrete manufacturing plants, plant’s producing projects for state DOTs, as well as precast manufacturing plant inspections. Inspections are performed by engineers with vast experience in precast manufacturing.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where are the inspectors located?
APA inspectors are dispersed throughout all regions of the country; therefore, travel costs are kept to a minimum, which further reduces inspection fees. The extremely affordable nature of the certification program allows precasters to become certified without having to include high inspection fees in your job costs.

What is the difference between APA and other certification program requirements?
Other programs also require and test for procedures and methods of personnel that are necessary for the production of high quality architectural precast concrete. One difference in the APA program is the requirement for testing and certification of a Certified Batch Plant operator for every plant.

When do future inspections occur?
After the initial (planned) inspection, all future inspections are unannounced. There are two inspections per year. A plant must be prepared for an inspection at all times. The APA orders inspections randomly, so all data is reflective of the daily status of the plant.

Still have questions?
Contact our office at 850.205.5637 or info@archprecast.org.

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