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, 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.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

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

AIA Continuing Education Programs - The Architectural Precast Association is proud to support the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Continuing Education System (CES). The APA currently has two AIA Continuing Education Programs available to architects: the Building Your Vision Seminar Series, a powerpoint presentation, which offers one to three learning units, and a Production Facility tour, which offers one learning unit. 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.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Just follow the four easy steps

APPLY > PREPARE > TEST & INSPECT > CERTIFY

STEP 1: APPLY

- Complete the Producer Membership Application along with the one-time application fee of $2500 and mail to: APA 325 John Knox Road, Suite L103, Tallahassee, FL 32303

  (Please note that half of the one-time application fee covers the cost of your preliminary inspection and required testing. The other half will be applied to your annual inspection fees upon passing.)

- The APA Board of Directors will vote to approve your application and APA will notify the producer when/if application is approved to begin the certification process.

APPLY > PREPARE > TEST & INSPECT > CERTIFY

STEP 2: PREPARE

To become certified, you will need:

- Approval of your Quality Control (QC) Manual
- To pass an initial plant inspection
- Staff to be tested and certified as a Batch Plant Operator (BPO), Quality Control Technician 1 (QC1) & Quality Control Technician 2 (QC2)

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: This 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. APA sends study guides for plant staff that will need to be certified.
2. Plant sends APA names of those who will be testing
   i. Batch Plant Operators (BPO)
   ii. Quality Control Technician 1 (QC1)
   iii. Quality Control Technician 2 (QC2)
3. Plant staff prepare for tests using study guides.

STEP 3: TEST & INSPECT

- Inspector arrives at plant and goes through a checklist of mandatory and other items.

- 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.

  » Batch Plant Operator Exam – closed book, not timed.

  » Level I QC Technician – open book, timed at 1 hour.

  » Level II QC Manager (passing Level I required) – open book, timed at 1 hour.

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
- Bi-annual inspection thereafter

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 $2500. Half of the fee covers the cost of your preliminary inspection and required testing. The other half will be applied to your annual inspection fees upon passing.

- Once your certification process is completed, you will receive a separate invoice for your prorated fees. Fees are based on dollar volume of sales of member companies. If a company has multiple plants; then, volume is based on the total sales of all plants. Dollar volume relates to sales F.O.B. plant(s). Fees include two plant certification inspections per year.

Gross Sales	Annual Fee
Producer companies with gross sales less than $3,000,000	$6,600
Producer companies with gross sales over $3,000,000 and less than $8,000,000	$7,400
Producer companies with gross sales over $8,000,000	$8,500

RESOURCES & TOOLS

Plant Certification Program Manual – An overview of what to expect during your inspection (will be provided after application is approved).

Sample Quality Control Manual –This manual delineates the procedures producers should follow in their plants to ensure compliance with the certification program. Each QC manual is reviewed by a committee consisting of professional engineers and production experts before it is approved. Failure to maintain the manual will constitute suspension of the plant's approved status. All APA certified plants are required to have on hand, at all times, an updated QC Manual.

Producer Membership Application – This application form must be submitted to APA to start the certification process.

Member Resources – These resources will help you be a better producer: Specifications Guide, Finishes Guide, Color and Texture Guide and Connection Manual

Study guides – These guides contain helpful tips for Level I, II and BPO exams (available after application is approved).

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?

To provide a specifier the quality assurance needed to instill confidence, inspection criteria must be supported by inspectors who have the knowledge to properly evaluate precasting procedures. This is why APA requires that every inspector be a seasoned Registered Professional Engineer or Quality Control Inspector with in-depth knowledge of precast concrete and its quality control requirements. Ten years' experience in the precast concrete industry is the minimum APA will accept. Individual inspector credentials are verified by APA before any inspection begins.

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.