
PROCEDURE: BACK CHECK PROCEDURE FOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS

Division of the State Architect (DSA) documents referenced within this publication are available on the [DSA Forms](#) or [DSA Publications](#) webpages.

DISCIPLINE(S)

ALL

PROJECT TYPES

All projects except over-the-counter applications. See *Procedure (PR) 18-09: Electronic Plan Review for Over-the-Counter (OTC) Projects*.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to inform design professionals submitting projects to DSA of a two-phase back check procedure, including notifications, scheduling, readiness check, and steps to follow for Phase 1 and Phase 2 back checks. The electronic plan review procedures associated with back check are addressed in *PR 18-04: Electronic Plan Review for Design Professionals*.

BACKGROUND

Obtaining DSA approval of construction project submittals consists of four stages.

Stage 1: Project Registration

Projects are required to be registered for submittal six to eight weeks prior to the actual submittal date. When projects are registered, a DSA application number is assigned to the project and DSA starts tracking the submittal, to schedule staff availability, so that plan review can commence when the project is submitted.

Stage 2: Intake

Upon submittal of the project, DSA processes the submittal documents and performs a “readiness for plan review” check. If the project is not complete, coordinated and construction ready, then the plans are considered “not ready for plan review” and are sent back to the design professional in responsible charge as incomplete. If the project is complete, coordinated and construction ready, then plan review commences.

Stage 3: Plan Review

After intake, the project is reviewed for compliance with the structural safety, access compliance and fire and life safety portions of the California Building Code (some projects also require review for energy compliance and green building standards compliance). During this stage, DSA develops comments on the submitted documents for the design professionals. These comments are about portions of the plans and specifications that DSA has determined are not code compliant or are otherwise problematic. When all disciplines have concluded their review, the DSA comments are provided to the design team. These comments shall be addressed by the design team and demonstrate code compliance in order for DSA to approve the plans.

PROCEDURE: BACK CHECK PROCEDURE FOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS**Stage 4: Back Check**

Once the design team has fully and completely addressed *all* the comments, the project enters the back check stage. Back check is the last stage, and when complete, results in DSA approval of the plans and specifications. Back check generally consists of two phases but may be completed in a single phase, depending on the thoroughness and quality of the plans and specifications when submitted for back check.

Back check generally consists of two phases as follows:

Phase 1 – Desk Back Check

- Plans and specifications are resubmitted for DSA staff to independently review for completeness and code compliance. DSA review for Phase 1 back check is to be independent, without the design professional's interaction, interruption, input, or additions. Any alterations or additions to the submitted documents by the design team to any discipline during the Phase 1 back check will cause an immediate halt to back check and require the Phase 1 back check to be rescheduled no sooner than two weeks.
- Phase 1 back check will occur only once per project. If the plans and specifications are determined to be complete and code compliant at the conclusion of Phase 1, then the project may be approved without proceeding to Phase 2. If, at the conclusion of Phase 1, the plans are determined to be incomplete or not code compliant, then Phase 2 back check will be required.
- Alternatively, Phase 2 back check may be requested in lieu of Phase 1 back check. This alternate option may be desirable for small projects to minimize the time spent in back check. For large projects that have substantive comments, such as those that require significant changes in design, computer modeling or calculations, or would otherwise require significant plan review of new or changed content, the DSA Lead Plan Reviewer (LPR) may not grant this request if it is deemed that a two-phase back check would be more expeditious.
 - Prior to approving the alternate back check procedure, the LPR shall consult with the supervisors of all disciplines participating in the review of the project application for their concurrence. If one or more disciplines requires the two-phase back check process, then the entire back check will be conducted under this process.

Phase 2 – In-Person Back Check

- Plans and specifications are resubmitted for DSA staff to review together (interactively) with the design professional team, for completeness and code compliance. This review will occur in person at the DSA regional office.
- Phase 2 back check may occur as many times as required until the plans and specifications are complete and code compliant.

PROCEDURE: BACK CHECK PROCEDURE FOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS**PROCEDURE****1. PHASE 1 – DESK BACK CHECK****1.1 Phase 1 Back Check – Scheduling**

1.1.1 The Lead Design Professional will contact DSA to request a back check appointment only when all the following items are complete.

1.1.1.1 The design team is confident that all corrections and clarifications are ready for back check.

1.1.1.2 No comments require further explanation or clarification.

1.1.1.3 Each DSA correction comment has a detailed reply in the Bluebeam Studio Session explaining how the design team resolved the comment and where the solution and substantiating documentation, if applicable, is located.

1.1.2 The Lead Design Professional will contact the LPR to schedule a Phase 1 back check. The LPR is identified on the first sheet of the “DWG” file and the “PR Tracking Table” file in the Bluebeam Studio Session. The preferred form of contact would be both an email and a telephone call. For projects that include structural plan review, the LPR is the structural safety plan reviewer. For projects that do not include structural plan review, the LPR is the access compliance plan reviewer, except for fire and life safety only projects where the LPR is the fire and life safety plan reviewer.

1.1.2.1 The Lead Design Professional shall contact the LPR at least one week prior to the intended Phase 1 “back check submittal date”.

1.1.3 The LPR will communicate with the Lead Design Professional the date the Phase 1 back check documents are to be submitted and the estimated completion date for all plan review disciplines involved in the project review. These dates are preliminary until verified.

1.1.3.1 When the LPR has verified the Phase 1 back check date, the Lead Design Professional will be notified (via email) of the confirmed Phase 1 “back check submittal date” and the “anticipated completion date”.

1.1.3.2 The Lead Design Professional shall submit all V2 required submittal documents into Bluebeam Studio Project per Section 1.2 below and PR 18-04 Section 4.1 per the agreed upon submittal schedule.

1.2 Phase 1 Back Check – Readiness Check

1.2.1 On the scheduled submittal date for the Phase 1 back check, the LPR will verify that all required submittal documents have been provided, all DSA plan review comments have been “INCORPORATED” and have adequate replies in the Bluebeam Studio Session “Markups List” panel. Refer to PR 18-04 Sections 3.2 and 3.3 for incorporating comments and adequate replies.

1.2.2 If the required Phase 1 back check submittal documents are not provided by the end of the business day on the “back check submittal date”, any plan review comments are not set to “INCORPORATED”, or adequate replies are not provided, then the back check submittal will be considered incomplete.

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1.2.3 If the submittal is determined to be incomplete, the LPR will notify the Lead Design Professional by email that the Phase 1 back check submittal is incomplete, the back check has been canceled, and a new Phase 1 back check will need to be scheduled a minimum of two weeks from the cancellation date.

1.2.4 If required submittal documents and adequate replies are provided by the submittal date but documents are not properly prepared, the LPR will notify the Lead Design Professional with a specific list of document preparation issues to resolve. The Lead Design Professional shall upload revised documents to the Bluebeam Studio Project by the end of the next business day. If revised documents are not received within the allocated time, the back check submittal will be considered incomplete, and the Lead Design Professional will be notified per Section 1.2.3 above.

1.2.5 When the submitted Phase 1 back check documents pass the “readiness check”, the Phase 1 back check will commence.

1.3 Phase 1 Back Check – Commencement

1.3.1 Phase 1 back check may or may not result in project approval. If the project is approvable, then Phase 2 back check will not be required. If the project is not approvable at the end of Phase 1 back check, then Phase 2 back check will be required.

1.3.2 DSA plan reviewers will review the corrected plans and specifications. For comments that are resolved, the comment status will be changed to “CLOSED”. For comments that are unresolved, the comment status will be changed to “OPEN” or “ADDITIONAL REVIEW REQUIRED”. Refer to PR 18-04 Section 4.3 for additional information.

1.3.3 DSA plan reviewers may add comments to address issues on new or revised content, where design team responses are not adequate or do not fully address the original DSA plan review comment. The design professionals are not permitted to respond to, incorporate or make corrections to, or otherwise contact DSA reviewers during the Phase 1 back check process.

1.3.4 All DSA plan review disciplines will complete their back check no later than the scheduled Phase 1 back check “anticipated completion date”.

1.3.5 The LPR remains the point of contact throughout back check and schedules all remaining back checks for all plan review disciplines, even if the LPR’s discipline is complete and approvable.

1.3.6 If the project is not approvable at completion of Phase 1 back check, the LPR will notify the Lead Design Professional that Phase 1 back check is complete and Phase 2 back check will be required. Additional review or a continuation of Phase 1 back check is not allowed.

2. PHASE 2 – IN-PERSON BACK CHECK

2.1 Phase 2 Back Check – Scheduling

2.1.1 The Lead Design Professional will contact the LPR to schedule Phase 2 back check after receiving notification that Phase 1 back check is complete and Phase 2 back check is required.

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2.1.2 The LPR will schedule a Phase 2 back check appointment date and estimated completion date for all the plan review disciplines (i.e., structural safety, fire and life safety, access compliance, and as necessary, CALGreen/Energy).

2.1.2.1 After the LPR has determined a preliminary Phase 2 “scheduled back check date” and “anticipated completion date”, the LPR will communicate this information to the Lead Design Professional. These dates are preliminary until verified.

2.1.2.2 After the LPR has verified the Phase 2 back check date, the Lead Design Professional will be notified (via email) of the confirmed Phase 2 “scheduled back check date” and time and the “anticipated completion date”.

2.2 Phase 2 Back Check – Readiness Check

2.2.1 The Lead Design Professional shall upload all required back check documents to Bluebeam Studio Project a minimum of two business days prior to the scheduled back check appointment date. The Lead Design Professional shall then email the LPR that the documents have been uploaded. DSA will not commence any back check until the client has arrived for the in-person back check appointment.

2.2.2 At a minimum of one day prior to the “scheduled back check date”, the LPR will go to Bluebeam Studio to verify that all required back check submittal documents have been provided, all DSA comments have been “INCORPORATED”, and all DSA comments have replies in the “Markups List” panel. Refer to PR 18-04 Sections 3.2 and 3.3 for additional information.

2.2.3 The “readiness check” will be performed in accordance with Section 2.2.2 above.

2.2.4 When the submitted Phase 2 back check documents pass the “readiness check”, the in-person back check can commence in the regional office back check room on the scheduled appointment day.

2.2.5 If the submittal does not pass the “readiness check”, the Lead Design Professional will be notified as per Section 1.2 above.

2.3 Phase 2 Back Check – Commencement

2.3.1 Phase 2 back checks are to be in person (not virtual or remote) and will take place in the regional office back check room.

2.3.2 Phase 2 back check will occur in the DSA regional office as many times as required until the plans and specifications are complete and code compliant.

2.3.3 Each time a Phase 2 back check occurs, it may be necessary for DSA plan reviewers who previously found their discipline to be approvable to provide a cursory review to check for change in content. Design professionals who have made changes to previously approved disciplines are to notify the LPR at the beginning of the back check appointment of any changes and the extent of the changes. A narrative of the changes may be required if they are extensive.

2.3.4 The LPR will coordinate the back check.

2.3.5 DSA plan reviewers from each discipline will review the plans and specifications with the design team.

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2.3.6 The design team may make corrections to their plans and specifications during the back check, provided their work does not interrupt the flow of the back check process.

2.3.7 If any DSA plan reviewer determines the project is not approvable and corrections cannot be completed during back check, the LPR will notify the lead design professional that another Phase 2 back check is required.

2.3.8 The LPR will schedule all subsequent Phase 2 back checks until the project is approved.

3. FINALIZING BACK CHECK APPROVAL

3.1 When all comments have been resolved and marked "CLOSED" by all DSA plan review disciplines, the LPR will close the project out and forward it to the DSA electronic plan review administrative staff for final processing of the construction documents.

3.2 The design team should anticipate receiving the DSA approval letter within five business days after the conclusion of back check. The approval date will be the date that the back check was completed.

3.3 The design professionals shall not alter, add to, or change the approved documents at any time after the conclusion of back check. This may cause cancellation of the application or approval, billing of additional fees, or a delay of the project approval.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Refer to the following resources for additional information:

- *PR 17-03: Project Submittal Appointment Process*