

# Opportunities for Input on ACI Technical Document Content

Make your voice heard through committee balloting, TAC reviews, public comment on standards, and appeals

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**D**id you know there are several ways to influence the content of ACI documents—both standards such as code requirements and specifications, and documents not requiring standardization? We often complain about overly complex or ambiguous requirements, unachievable expectations, or just plain mistakes in ACI documents, but we do have opportunities for input.

## Join a Committee

The obvious first opportunity is becoming a voting member of document-producing committees. Active committee members are the ones who write the documents, so taking an active role and voicing your opinions before the text is set will give you the greatest influence over the final content of the document. If you disagree with a portion of the document, you can cast negative ballots on any provisions you believe to be unacceptable, as long as you provide a reason and suggest text to fix the problem. You can't just say, "I don't like it."

The committee consensus process must then resolve the negative by finding the reason persuasive (a change is made), nonpersuasive (no change), or unrelated to the

balloted item (no change). For a more complete discussion of committee actions, refer to Ken Hover's President's Memo in the February 2011 issue of *Concrete International* (V. 33, No. 2, p. 7). Once all negative votes are resolved, the document then moves on to the Technical Activities Committee (TAC)—the Institute's final authority on all technical matters—for review.

## Become an External Reviewer

TAC reviews all new and revised ACI technical committee documents for:

- Technical content and correctness;
- Potential conflicts, duplications, and overlaps with other ACI documents;
- Compliance with ACI formats, such as in the case of specifications; and
- Clarity.

TAC reviews the entire document, even if only one section has been revised. The submitted document is sent to all TAC members, to other committees that may be affected by the document, and to external reviewers who are experts on the subject matter. Volunteering to be an external reviewer can be very helpful because it provides

### ASCC-ACI Task Group

At the ACI Board of Direction meeting on November 12, 2009, a joint Board task group between ACI and the American Society of Concrete Contractors (ASCC) was formed "to look at contractor needs in ACI and their effectiveness on committees." The Task Group submitted a final report at the October 28, 2010, ACI Board of Direction meeting. This article was prepared by the Task Group to fulfill one of the suggestions in their final report, which was to "publicize the existing ACI policies for producing errata and for proposing and making changes to current ACI documents."

The members of the Task Group were Michael J. Schneider and Kenneth C. Hover (Co-Chairs), Beverly Garnant, Charles S. Hanskat, William M. Klorman, Ward R. Malisch, and Joseph C. Sanders.

a fresh look at the document through the eyes of a potential user that was not part of the document's development. If you'd like to become part of the pool of potential reviewers, contact Jamie McMann at [jamie.mcmann@concrete.org](mailto:jamie.mcmann@concrete.org).

## How Does a TAC Review Work?

Each document is assigned to a TAC review group (RG) with a review chief, two other TAC members, and a staff liaison. All comments received from reviewers, including those from the external reviewers, are compiled. The RG checks all comments and prepares a proposed list of TAC review comments. The RG then meets with committee representatives (usually the committee Chair and a few other key committee members) to discuss the TAC review comments.

After the RG meets with the committee representatives, a final list of review comments is prepared, and the RG makes a recommendation to TAC regarding the document. TAC considers the recommendation and makes a decision on the document:

- Document is approved for publication, contingent upon satisfactory response to TAC review comments in a timely manner; or
- Document is not approved for publication and it is returned to the committee for revision, reballoting, and resubmission (commonly called "3R").

The committee is notified of TAC's decision, and the final list of TAC review comments is sent to the committee for consideration.

The committee must document its response to each TAC review comment. The committee can agree with a primary or editorial comment and make an appropriate change to the document or disagree with reason. When the committee disagrees, a detailed reason statement for the disagreement must be documented. The committee can agree with a secondary comment and make a change to the document, disagree (no documentation is required), or agree to take the issue up as new business.

### P, E, and S comments

TAC review comments are divided into three categories: primary, editorial, and secondary. Primary (P) comments identify technical issues that the committee must address before publication of the document. Editorial (E) comments identify editorial issues that the committee must address before publication of the document. Secondary (S) comments identify technical or editorial issues that should be addressed either in this document or the next revision of the document.

All responses to TAC comments must be approved by ballot of the committee, regardless of whether the response resulted in a change to the document.

After the document has been revised in response to TAC review comments, it's submitted to the ACI Managing Director of Engineering. When adequate compliance with TAC review comments is verified, ACI staff proceeds with either publication if it's a nonmandatory-language document (generally guides and reports) or standardization for mandatory language documents (generally codes and standards).

## Comment on a Standard during the Public Comment Period

When a document goes through the standardization process, it is made available in an ACI periodical, on the ACI Web site, or both for a 45-day public discussion and comment period. When the proposed standard will only be published on the ACI Web site, a notice of availability is published in *Concrete International*. Each issue of *Concrete International* includes a Public Discussion page with a summary of documents open for public discussion.

The public comment period is an easy and convenient opportunity for anyone to comment on the document. After all public comments are received, the technical committee originating the document prepares and ballots a response to these comments. That ballot (often referred to as a closure) is submitted to TAC for approval and then to the Standards Board for procedural review. If all procedures have been followed, the Standards Board releases the discussion and closure for publication in an ACI periodical, on the ACI Web site, or both, and recommends publishing the document as an ACI standard.

## Appeal a Nonstandardized Document

ACI members still have a chance to change documents by using the appeals process. A voting committee member has the right to appeal a Technical Committee decision on a committee document under development by the appellant's committee. The appellant must submit an appeal package to the ACI Managing Director of Engineering. If an appeal is upheld, the document is not processed further and is returned to the committee with comments.

Documents in process may be appealed on technical or procedural grounds. TAC is the final Institute authority on both technical and procedural appeals pertaining to nonstandardized technical committee documents. TAC normally meets three times a year; all appeals must be submitted in writing to ACI staff at least 6 weeks before the TAC meeting for inclusion on their agenda.

A current member of the Institute has the right to appeal provisions of a published technical document,

but only on technical grounds. The appellant must again submit an appeal package to the ACI Managing Director of Engineering. If a technical appeal is upheld, the published document is corrected by the originating committee within a time limit established by TAC or the document is withdrawn.

## Appeal a Standard

A current member of the Institute also has the right to appeal provisions of an ACI standard to TAC on technical grounds. The appellant must again submit an appeal package to the ACI Managing Director of Engineering. If a technical appeal is upheld, the published document is corrected by the originating committee within a time limit established by TAC or is withdrawn.

Finally, a current member of the Institute can appeal acceptance of an ACI standard to the Standards Board. Such an appeal can be made only on procedural grounds. Failure to follow all provisions in the Technical Committee

Manual (TCM) is not sufficient grounds for refusing to approve publication of the standard. Only the TCM provisions related to procedural issues and stated in mandatory language can be successfully appealed.

## Report an Error or Omission

An error or omission in an ACI document can be corrected if the Chair of the ACI committee responsible for maintaining the document recognizes that the correction doesn't require further committee action. The correction is made by issuance of errata. Document users can report possible errors or omissions at [www.concrete.org/Committees/SearchErrata.aspx](http://www.concrete.org/Committees/SearchErrata.aspx). Note that errata can also be reviewed using the same link.

In summary, document users have opportunities to give input on documents by being voting members of committees, by serving as TAC external reviewers, and by making public comments on standards. Members of ACI can appeal the content of documents in progress or published documents by following the appeals process.

Selected for reader interest by the editors.

### Example: Correcting an error in ACI 117-10

When "Specification for Tolerances for Concrete Construction and Materials (ACI 117-10) and Commentary" was published in June 2010, there was an unintentional omission. Section 4.8 on deviation from slope or plane includes measurement requirements for floor surface finish tolerances. The section applies to measurements made to verify that a slab surface is within tolerance by measuring the gap under a 10 ft straightedge or through the use of  $F_F$  and  $F_L$  numbers. Section 4.8.4.4 originally stated:

The composite  $F_F$  and  $F_L$  (if applicable) numbers for each test surface shall be measured and reported within 72 hours after completion of slab concrete finishing operations and before removal of any supporting shores.

As originally written, this section set a time limit for taking  $F_F$  and  $F_L$  measurements but was silent on when measurements for the gap under a 10 ft straightedge were to be taken. The omission was noted, the ACI Committee 117 Chair was notified, and the committee corrected the language to read:

Floor test surfaces shall be measured and reported within 72 hours after completion of slab concrete finishing operations and before removal of any supporting shores.

This language agrees with Section 4.8.4.1 of the 2006 edition of the specification. An erratum was issued by ACI. Subsequent printings and electronic versions of ACI 117-10, including the version in the online *Manual of Concrete Practice*, now contain the corrected language.