

## Consultants Corner

### The Right Price

#### How to quote and estimate the cost of a special inspection

by Mark Baker, P.E.

*Editor's Note: Consultant's Corner is a new column, which will appear regularly beginning in 2001. In this column Mark Baker, P.E., a specialist in exterior wall engineering of Miami-based IBA Consultants will answer your questions concerning building exteriors for both residential and commercial projects. Got a question? Please email it to [mbaker@glass.com](mailto:mbaker@glass.com).*

If you have been asked to include the cost of special inspection in a quote for a window replacement project, you'll need to know what special inspection is and how to estimate the cost.

Each of the major building codes (UBC, BOCA, SBCCI and the SFBC) has a provision allowing building officials to require or permit a builder or developer to employ an independent inspection service, workers of which are typically called "special inspectors." Special inspectors are brought in to perform inspection of certain types of construction on projects, which in the opinion of the building official, involves unusual conditions concerning size, height, complexity of design or pace of construction. Many times this will include building envelope components including curtainwalls, windows and EIFS.

The idea is that a local building department may not be able to keep up with an extremely large, complex or fast paced project, especially during periods of significant construction. Rather than hold up a project until the building official can perform required inspections, they allow builders to hire someone to inspect the work as it progresses. The special inspectors usually

must demonstrate their competence, training and experience to the satisfaction of the building official and must also be a licensed engineer or architect.

Typically, when special inspectors are employed, a building official will not issue a certificate of occupancy or completion prior to receiving a statement of inspection from the special inspector certifying that the work was installed in compliance with the permit documents. I do not believe that a glazing subcontractor can provide special inspection certification.

The cost of special inspection is dependent upon many things including the size and complexity of the project and the glazing systems as well as the accessibility of the work. Other concerns include determining if the

inspection is going to be performed from the building interior or exterior and if any special equipment such as ladders, swing stages etc. is required.

Also important are the project and component installation sequences. Will inspections be scheduled for one complete floor at a time or is the work progressing vertically? Are critical anchorage elements concealed thus requiring an inspection during the course of installation ( i.e.: head receptors)?

Finally, the ability and responsiveness of the subcontractors and installers determine how many times an opening must be inspected.

Typically we expect to walk each floor twice, once for the initial inspection and once to reinspect any locations where deficiencies were noted. Historically, special inspection costs are between 1 percent and 3 percent of the total glazing package cost, which takes into account most of the above with the exception of the subcontractor/installer qualifications.



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