

Re-Write of the Standard Specifications

From wordy to direct...

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So, what am I doing?

- A major re-write of the Standard Specification.
- The new style will be **Active Voice/Imperative Mood** and **Active Voice/Indicative Mood!**
 - The style will change from passive voice and long legalistically worded sentences.
 - Direct statements will be easily readable and understandable.
 - References will be hyperlinked...
 - This means that you can click on a hyperlink in a section, read the reference, then return to where you were.



What does this mean?

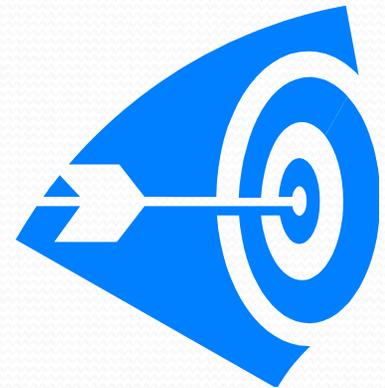
- The “Dictionary” definition...
 - **Active Voice/Imperative Mood:**
The subject of a sentence written in the active voice/imperative mood is not explicitly stated.
- Example:
“Construct a portland cement concrete pavement on a prepared subgrade or base course.”

What does this mean?

- As opposed to...

“This work consists of constructing a jointed, portland cement concrete pavement on a prepared base using either fixed forms or slip forms.”
- It’s simple, direct, and clearly stated...

“Construct a portland cement concrete pavement on a prepared subgrade or base course.”





What does this mean?

- The “Dictionary” definition...
 - **Active Voice/Indicative Mood:**
Sentences defining the actions or responsibility of the Department or its representatives are generally written in active voice/indicative mood.
- Example:
“The Engineer will measure work acceptably completed as specified.”

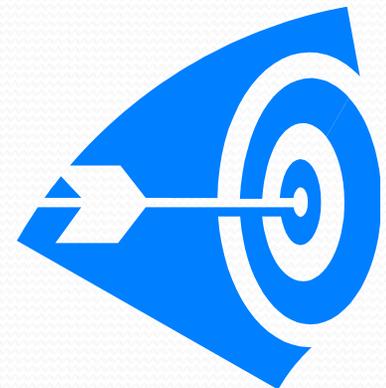
What does this mean?

- As opposed to...

“The quantity of portland cement concrete jointed pavement will be measured as the number of square yards (square meters) completed and accepted.”

- It's simple, direct, and clearly stated...

“The Engineer will measure work acceptably completed as specified.”



Why it makes sense to re-write in this new style



- The purpose of the Standard Specification – it establishes the relationship between the Department and the Contractor.
- The writing of current Standard Specification is in the third person, in effect.
- The re-write will accomplish the following:
 - The Department's responsibility becomes very clear.
 - The expectations of the Contractor are very clear.
 - The new style gives direct instruction to the Contractor.

Why it makes sense to re-write in this new style...(cont)

- It's been literally decades since there was a true re-write or re-wording of the Standard Specifications.
 - Most of the changes over the years have been in response to claims – a sentence at a time...
- We hope for fewer claims...
 - Claims will still occur...
 - Claims should be easier to defend.





Other Enhancements:

- An appendix of all test/material specs will be added.
- All test/material specs will be vetted and corrected.
- Table of Contents and Index will be hyperlinked in the pdf.
- All cross references will be checked and corrected
- You can print the parts you need....
- The intent going forward is to incorporate Supplemental Specifications more often into a new version.

How long will this take?

- Hmmm...
 - Next question?!
- It depends on other tasks that step in front of the re-write...
 - My guess is 8 – 10 months after I can get back to it...





Why am I doing this?

- Well, it needs to be done...
 - I have significant experience in technical writing.
 - Being semi-retired, it's good task for me.
- AASHTO migrated to this style in their guide specifications.
 - It provides a good guide.
 - There are some other good examples out there.
- Oddly enough, it's something I want to do...
 - Refer to previous slide...





Final thought...

A lawn is nature under totalitarian rule. -Michael Pollan, author, journalism professor (b. 1955)

QUESTIONS?

(Thanks for pretending to pay attention...)