

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OVERSIGHT

Through its four regional offices, the Division of the State Architect (DSA) provides design and construction oversight for K–12 schools, community colleges, and various other state-owned and leased facilities. DSA reviews plans for structural safety, access compliance, and fire and life safety approval, as applicable.

K-12 Public Schools

The Field Act establishes stringent structural safety standards for public schools to withstand earthquakes and other hazards, not only to protect students and staff, but also because schools may serve as emergency shelters for their communities in the event of a disaster. Since the Field Act was enacted in 1933, DSA’s review and approval have ensured that there has never been a major structural failure at a California K-12 public school.

Community Colleges

DSA provides design and construction oversight for community college facilities projects.

State Essential Services Buildings

Essential services buildings provide services to the public after a major disaster. As such, they must have a high level of structural integrity. DSA is charged with enforcement of the Essential Services Building Seismic Safety Act and reviews and approves plans for these state facilities.

Other State-Funded Construction

DSA reviews compliance with accessibility requirements for all state-funded buildings in California. In addition to reviewing plans for traditional K-12 public schools and community colleges, DSA conducts accessibility reviews of construction plans for California courts, University of California, California State University, and state-funded charter school facilities.

CODE DEVELOPMENT

DSA, among several other state agencies, proposes changes to the California Building Code through the Building Standard Commission’s rulemaking process. DSA proposes changes to the California Building Standards Code (Title 24), and develops and publishes interpretations of regulations, policies, and procedures. Code changes are made on a triennial cycle, with an 18-month intervening code cycle and the option for emergency code adoptions.

Structural Safety

DSA Structural Safety (DSA-SS) adopts and amends Title 24 Building regulations applicable to California’s K-12 public schools, community colleges and state essential services facilities.

Accessibility

DSA develops and proposes construction-related accessibility requirements for all California buildings accessed by the public. These building code regulations facilitate accessibility for persons with disabilities to public buildings, public accommodations, commercial buildings, and public housing

Historical

DSA is the caretaker of California's State Historical Building Code, which provides regulations and standards for the rehabilitation, preservation, restoration or relocation of historical properties of importance to the history, architecture, or culture of an area.

PROJECTS OVERSEEN / PROJECT VALUE		
2016/17 – FIRST HALF (AS OF 12/31/16)	PROJECTS	ESTIMATED PROJECT COST
Projects Submitted (Excluding Access Only)	1,494	\$ 3.1 billion
Access Only Projects Submitted	158	\$ 848.8 million

2015/16 – FULL YEAR	PROJECTS	ESTIMATED PROJECT COST
Projects Submitted (Excluding Access Only)	3,149	\$ 4.8 billion
Access Only Projects Submitted	379	\$ 1.4 billion

DSA PROGRAMS

PLAN REVIEW FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

The Division of the State Architect (DSA) reviews plans for public school construction and certain other state-funded building projects to ensure that plans, specifications, and construction comply with California's building codes (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations). The majority of DSA's plan review and construction oversight focuses on new construction and alteration projects for California school and community college districts. DSA's plan review ensures the project's compliance with code requirements related to:

- Structural**
One of DSA's primary roles is the structural safety review of public schools and state essential services buildings to ensure that the facilities meet the high standards set in the Field Act to withstand an earthquake.
- Fire and Life Safety**
DSA's Fire and Life Safety program addresses the safety of occupants in buildings, as related to fire resistive building materials, fire alarms, fire suppression equipment, safe occupant egress, and firefighting equipment access.
- Access**
DSA provides access compliance services to ensure that public schools and state-funded construction projects meet accessibility requirements for people with disabilities.
- Energy**
DSA reviews projects for compliance with applicable California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) requirements for sustainability.

INSPECTOR AND LABORATORY PROGRAMS

DSA tests and certifies project inspectors who are hired by school districts to provide continuous inspection of public K-12 school construction projects. Project inspectors ensure that construction work adheres to the plans approved by DSA.

DSA evaluates laboratories for structural testing and special inspection services to ensure that they meet high standards for safety before they can do work related to school construction projects. Laboratories accepted by DSA are eligible for hire by entities under DSA's jurisdiction.

CERTIFIED ACCESS SPECIALIST (CASp) PROGRAM

The Certified Access Specialist (CASp) program certifies specialists who can inspect buildings and sites for compliance with applicable state and federal construction-related accessibility standards.

Additionally, DSA provides outreach and educational materials for business owners to educate them on their requirements to ensure accessibility, and on the legal benefits provided by CASp inspections.

GAS SHUTOFF VALVE CERTIFICATION

DSA oversees the certification of two types of gas shutoff valves as required by the Health and Safety Code: Excess Flow Automatic Gas Shutoff Valves and Earthquake Sensitive Shutoff Valves. DSA reviews reports provided by qualified testing laboratories and certifies products that meet the applicable standards. DSA certification is currently for residential structures only.

DSA offers classes that promote consistent knowledge and application of the California Building Codes, as well as information for successful plan review and construction of projects under DSA's jurisdiction. Classes are open to the public and DSA staff.

HISTORY

- 1906: San Francisco Earthquake
- 1907: The State Architect is created under the Department of Engineering to oversee design for all state buildings
- 1933: Long Beach Earthquake
- 1933: The Field Act establishes the Division of the State Architect (DSA), which is charged with establishing and enforcing safety standards for new public schools
- 1945: DSA moves to the Department of Public Works
- 1963: DSA moves to the Department of General Services (DGS)
- 1982: A provision is added to the Field Act, specifying that nothing in the Act “shall prevent beneficial occupancy by a school district” prior to DSA certification that a school building complies with the Field Act
- 1992: DSA assumes responsibility from the State Fire Marshall for ensuring Fire and Life Safety code compliance
- 1997: DSA delegates some responsibilities to the DGS Real Estate Services Division, representing the following division of responsibility:

DSA

Design and construction oversight for K–12 schools, community colleges, and state essential services facilities. The division also develops accessibility, structural safety, and historical building codes and standards utilized in various public and private buildings throughout the state of California.

Real Estate Services Division

Fulfills state agencies' facility and real property needs. This includes asset management and planning, property sales and acquisition, project management, architectural and engineering services, leasing and planning, construction management, energy efficiency and supply programs, and environmental assessments.

RECENT DSA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

IMPROVED CERTIFICATION RATE

Currently, more than 93 percent of school construction projects are certified by DSA within 120 days of completion. Prior to the State Architect's initiation of an inspection card process in 2013, that certification rate was only 70 percent.

CERTIFICATION OF LEGACY PROJECTS

Legacy projects are school construction projects completed from 1983-2010. As of January 1, 2011, 16,386 completed school facilities projects were not certified by DSA. As of November 1, 2016, DSA had certified 8,603 of those projects, reducing the number of uncertified projects by 52 percent.

7X7X7 DESIGN, ENERGY, WATER

In 2016, DSA launched an initiative to encourage school districts statewide to develop long-range master plans to reduce energy and water consumption on their campuses, while improving the quality of educational spaces. A central goal is to facilitate the achievement of zero net energy for all existing K-14 facilities by 2030. The project engaged seven architectural firms to develop seven conceptual case studies in school design that will reduce energy and water consumption and result in a better learning environment, on seven campuses (six K-12 schools and a community college). The seven campuses are representative of typical building types from different eras constructed across California's varied climate zones.

ELECTRONIC PLAN REVIEW

In 2016, DSA launched the first steps toward achieving fully electronic review of school construction plans. DSA's initial phase is to conduct the "backcheck" portion on plan review electronically and then phase in the complete plan review process. To date, over 100 electronic backcheck appointments have been conducted.

IMPROVED CLIENT INTERACTION

The interactions between DSA and some stakeholders became strained over the years. With a renewed commitment to transparency, DSA worked to keep stakeholders better informed on the matters of interest to them. One improvement was DSA's development of an email notification system to keep more than 20,000 interested stakeholders informed on the DSA programs and topics of interest to them.

ALIGNMENT OF STATE AND FEDERAL ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In 2012, DSA completed an intensive task to align construction-related accessibility provisions in California's Building Code with federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. With this significant accomplishment, DSA provided that compliance with California Building Code accessibility requirements automatically satisfies construction-related Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, creating efficiencies for clients and better facilitating accessibility for individuals with disabilities.