



**SSPC QP7: INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM
APPLICATION, INSTRUCTIONS, AND PROGRAM RULES**

Table of Contents

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
II.	GENERAL PROGRAM PROCEDURES	4
III.	APPLICATION FORM FOR SSPC PAINTING CONTRACTOR INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM QUALIFICATION (QP7) 5	
IV.	REQUIRED INFORMATION	9
V.	EVALUATION CHECKLIST	10
VI.	INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM FEE PAYMENTS	10
VII.	SUBMITTAL PROCEDURE	12
VIII.	EVALUATION PROCESS	12
A.	CANCELLATION OF AUDIT.....	13
B.	CORRECTIVE ACTION.....	13
C.	DETERMINATION OF STATUS	13
D.	QUALIFICATION PERIOD	14
E.	APPEAL PROCEDURE	14
F.	OBTAINING A PAINTING CONTRACT AND SCHEDULING A FULL AUDIT.....	15
G.	ELIGIBILITY STATUS.....	16
IX.	SPECIAL PROVISIONS.....	16
A.	MAJOR CHANGES IN COMPANY’S ORGANIZATION	16
B.	SUSPENSION OF QUALIFICATION FOR NON-PAYMENT	17
X.	DEFINITIONS	17

Application Form, Instructions, and Program Rules / SSPC QP7

I. Introduction

SSPC developed the painting contractor introductory program to verify the capabilities of contractors with less than 12 months experience or no experience performing industrial, marine or architectural surface preparation and coating application in the field. The QP7 introductory program provides an initial step for contractors who currently do not have the experience required to be eligible for QP certification but who wish to eventually achieve certification. The program's objective is to determine if a painting contractor has the personnel, organization, qualifications, procedures, knowledge and capability – on paper – to produce quality surface preparation and coating application on industrial, marine or commercial/institutional structures. For the purposes of the introductory program, eligible structures are defined as those identified in the appropriate QP standard.

Please note that the SSPC QP7 contractor introductory program does not involve inspection of the contractor's coating work or training of its personnel. It does not cover coating application capability conducted exclusively at a contractor's fixed facility (i.e., shop painting). Finally, the program is not intended to guarantee the quality or safety performance of a specific contractor on any of its projects. Rather, it is intended to assist facility owners in their evaluation of painting contractors with less than 12 months experience or no painting experience as an organization. The procedure is intended to allow owners to qualify inexperienced contractors for public works projects set aside by owners willing to hire contractors that meet the requirements of this procedure.

While SSPC QP 7 confirms a company's capability – on paper – to perform industrial, marine or commercial painting, owners, specifiers and general contractors are encouraged to also assess the painting contractor's financial ability to perform a job as well as to review any work history and capabilities to meet site-specific requirements and other job-related requirements not covered under this program. To better ensure the success of a project, owners should write quality specifications, implement plans to enforce the requirements of the specification through appropriate quality assurance and establish plans to maintain good communication with the contractor before work begins and throughout the project. This is necessary in addition to ensuring that the contractor meets the requirements of this program.

This package contains the information and materials needed to apply for the SSPC QP7 painting contractor introductory program. You will find copies of this application and all other documents detailing program requirements, related procedures, clarifications, etc. on SSPC's website at <http://www.sspc.org>. Visit QP Programs home page and follow the appropriate links. Contact the SSPC certification program manager or

certification specialist at 1-877-281-7772 at extension 2235 or extension 2209 if you have any questions about the application process.

While every precaution is taken to ensure that all information furnished is accurate and complete, SSPC cannot assume responsibility nor incur any obligation resulting from the use or misuse of the methods contained herein or of the introductory program itself.

II. General Program Procedures

The SSPC QP7 contractor introductory program qualification process contains this sequence of procedures that you must follow.

1. Complete the application found in **Section III: Application Form for SSPC Painting Contractor Introductory Program Qualification (QP7)**.
2. Gather and prepare the required information outlined in the appropriate QP certification application category.
3. Send SSPC the QP7 application, submittal items required by the appropriate QP certification application category, the non-refundable application fee and the required audit deposit. SSPC will accept e-mail or digital versions of applications and submittals, provided we can open the documents.

SSPC staff will review your application and submittals within 10 working days after receipt. If everything is in order, the SSPC certification program manager or certification specialist will work with you to schedule the audit. If not, SSPC will indicate what must be done or what additional information is required to complete the submittal.

Using the relevant QP audit checklist available on the SSPC website at <http://www.sspc.org/qp-for-contractors>, an SSPC program auditor will conduct an office audit to determine if your company is in conformance with QP7 requirements for the category of qualification sought. It usually takes one or two days to complete the audit. At the end of the audit, the auditor will schedule an exit interview for the purpose of advising you of any deficiencies cited during the audit.

If your company has a qualifying score, it will be qualified (not certified) as a QP7 contractor **for a one-time 18-month period** subject to its ability to maintain program standards, adhere to the program's administrative rules and avoid any disciplinary actions as described in the **disciplinary action criteria (DAC)**. QP7 qualification lapses after 18 months and can only be extended for up to an additional six months for mitigating circumstances at the discretion of the program administrator. The SSPC program manager will evaluate requests for extension on a case-by-case basis.

If your company does not qualify, you have 45 days after SSPC notifies you of your audit results to submit an acceptable written corrective action plan to correct deficiencies and

request a follow-up audit. If you do not submit acceptable corrective actions within 45 days, your company will lose its eligibility for QP7 qualification.

Within 60 days prior to completion of the work experience required by the QP certification your company is aspiring to achieve, your company must contact SSPC to schedule a full audit consisting of an office audit and a field audit at a minimum of one active job site that qualifies for the certification category sought. Using the audit checklist, an SSPC program auditor will conduct an audit to determine if your company is in conformance with quality management and field operation requirements for certification to the QP category sought. It usually takes one or two days to complete the audit.

Program rules provide for an appeals procedure should you contest audit findings or SSPC's determination regarding your company's status.

NOTE: *Companies with active or previous industrial or commercial painting work that meets the minimum experience requirements of a given QP certification are ineligible for the introductory program and must apply for the appropriate QP certification program.*

III. Application Form for SSPC Painting Contractor Introductory Program Qualification (QP7)

INSTRUCTIONS: *This application form is used to provide information that will aid in evaluating and rating your company for QP7 qualification. To avoid delays you must answer all questions accurately and truthfully. Information must be either typed or clearly printed. Please send SSPC two typed or printed hardcopies or one digital copy of your completed application along with two copies of submittals or one digital copy and the correct non-refundable fee. SSPC will accept digital information provided that we can open the files. Check with the QP certification specialist for acceptable file types.*

1. Company Name: _____

Principal Officer/Title: _____

Business Address: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Website Address (if applicable): _____

Office Telephone (w/ area code): _____

Mobile Business Phone: _____

Fax Number: _____

Federal ID Number: _____

Type of Business: Sole Proprietorship Partnership
 Corporation Other

Length of time your company has operated as a painting contractor or performed coating work: _____

Is the location listed above your company's main place of business?

Yes No

List all branch or division offices and locations where coating work is performed:

Since start-up, has your company undergone – or is planning to undergo – any significant changes such as name change; change in ownership; Chapter 7, 11 or 13 bankruptcies; purchase or takeover of another contracting firm; joint venture/partnership with another contractor; executive management personnel changes; etc.?

Yes No

*If yes, please attach an explanation that meets the notification requirements described in **Section IX: Special Provisions, Part A: Major Changes in a Company's Organization.***

2. QP7 Qualification Category Applied For (check appropriate box):

- Surface Preparation & Coating Application – Industrial or Marine Steel Structures (Field)
- Hazardous Paint Removal in Conjunction with Coating Application
- Architectural Coating Application – Commercial & Institutional Structures
- Surface Preparation & Coating Application – Industrial or Marine Concrete Structures

NOTE: *The Hazardous Paint Removal Category can only be achieved as a supplemental qualification to one or more of the other categories.*

3. Provide evidence of current Worker's Compensation insurance.
4. Attach copies of any serious or willful federal, state/provincial or local regulatory agency worker safety and health or environmental noncompliance or other regulatory citations or violations (e.g., wage and hourly violations) and citations issued to any of your company's painting operations since start-up. Provide resolution/settlement/notice of contest documentation if applicable as well as a brief summary of policy changes and actions your company has taken as a result of the citations or violations. Submit required copy of OSHA Form 170 or equivalent regarding any fatality that has occurred on any of your job sites since start-up.
5. Has your company or any of its owners, managers or supervisory personnel been involved in any of the following practices with any company in the past 36 months?
 - Fraud;
 - Alteration of test results or reports;
 - Criminal conviction;
 - Misrepresentation of information; or
 - Illegal business practices.

Refer to the **disciplinary action criteria (DAC)**.

Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

- 6a. Is your company now or has it in the past been associated or affiliated in any way with a contracting company operating under another name, which has been disciplined by SSPC under the DAC?

Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

6b. Are any of your company's officers, directors, owners, managing agents or managers now exercising – or have they previously exercised – direct or indirect control, management or ownership of another contracting company that has been disciplined by SSPC under the DAC or had certification suspended or revoked for failing an audit or violating program rules?

Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

If your company has absolutely not had such association with a company previously disciplined under the DAC, please check this box:

NOTE: *Failure to answer truthfully or any instance of providing inaccurate information will result in immediate revocation or denial of qualification status.*

7. Has your company been disqualified or disbarred from any bidder's list since start-up?

Yes No

If yes, please provide the reason for the disqualification and the name of the facility owner issuing the disqualification: _____

8. Please attach a copy of the most recent (12 months) OSHA accident and illness summary. OSHA Forms 300 and 300A, if applicable.

9. Please enclose a copy of your current written safety and health compliance program. If you are also applying for the hazardous paint removal category, please submit a copy of your environmental compliance program.

10. Average number of workers you have employed since start-up: _____

11. Is your company an organizational member of SSPC?

Yes No

NOTE: *By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the introductory qualification program application form and instructions, the procedure set forth therein and the **disciplinary action criteria (DAC)**. As a principal officer of the applying*

contractor, my company and I agree to abide by and be bound by the rules, regulations and procedures set forth therein. Must be signed by president or CEO.

Signed: _____

Printed Name and Title: _____

Date Submitted: _____

Qualification Fee and Deposit Submitted with this Application: \$ _____

NOTE: *Failure to report accurate, complete information will delay your evaluation. Omission or falsification of information may result in withholding or denial of qualification status. Your company will be checked against the provisions of the DAC. If your company has critical faults as defined in the DAC and these faults fall under the categories of suspension or revocation, your application will be returned. If your company has critical faults that fall under warning or probation, you may be issued qualification status under probation or warning and will be subject to further disciplinary action if future problems arise, provided that your company is indeed qualified after successfully complete the initial QP7 audit.*

IV. Required Information

No field audit at an active job site is required to obtain QP7 introductory program qualification. However, in order to rate and evaluate your company, SSPC requires your company to meet the requirements – on paper – of the QP certification you ultimately wish to obtain after achieving QP7 qualification as designated below:

QP7: Surface Preparation and Coating Application – Industrial/Marine Steel Structures

SSPC evaluates your company against the current QP1 audit checklist and QP1 submittal requirements with the exception of evaluation items that can only be rated at a job site.

QP7: Architectural Coating Application

SSPC evaluates your company against the current QP9 audit checklist and QP9 submittal requirements with the exception of evaluation items that can only be rated at a job site.

QP7: Surface Preparation & Coating Application: Industrial or Marine Concrete Structures

SSPC evaluates your company against the current QP8 audit checklist and QP8 submittal requirements with the exception of evaluation items that can only be rated at a job site.

QP7: Hazardous Paint Removal in Conjunction with Coating Application

SSPC evaluates your company against the QP2 audit checklist and QP2 submittal requirements with the exception of evaluation items that can only be rated at a job site. You must, however, also apply for a core category (i.e., one of those listed above) in order to apply for the hazardous paint removal category.

The auditor will verify and evaluate all items using the appropriate QP audit checklist during the office visit. Observing an active job site is not required for QP7 qualification but will be required to complete requirements for certification. The auditor may also evaluate DAC-related items as directed by the program administrator.

V. Evaluation Checklist

See the appropriate QP audit checklist and application to note what submittals are required and which items the SSPC auditor will evaluate during the QP7 qualification audit. Again, QP7 does not involve a field audit at an active job site, but it does require the QP7 applicant to meet – on paper – all of the requirements of the relevant QP certification with the exception of evaluation items that can only be rated at a job site.

VI. Introductory Program Fee Payments

Companies applying for the introductory program qualification must submit the applicable **Administrative Fee** plus **Audit Deposit** to cover anticipated audit expenses with their application. SSPC will withhold your qualification until receiving total payment.

NOTE: *The fees cover the cost of staff time to review and process your application package, the cost of the on-site evaluation and audit, and the overhead expenses required to operate the Contractor Certification Program.*

Annual administrative fees are not refundable if a contractor's qualifications or certification(s) are suspended or revoked.

Determine your audit expense from the following:

QP1 Fee Schedule			
	Sustaining Member	Patron Member	Non Member
<i>Administrative Fee</i>	\$1,350	\$1,600	\$2,150
<i>Audit Deposit</i>	\$2,600	\$2,600	\$2,600
<i>Certification Total with no Corrective Action</i>	\$3,950	\$4,200	\$4,750

QP1 Additional Fees, As Applicable			
	Sustaining Member	Patron Member	Non Member
<i>With Corrective Action Verification:</i>	+\$300	+\$550	+\$800
<i>If Outside US/Mexico:</i>	+\$1,500	+\$1,500	+\$1,500

EXAMPLE: *If your company is applying for the QP7 introductory program qualification, submit \$4,100 (\$1,600 Administrative Fee + \$2,500 Audit Deposit).*

SSPC will return non-responsive and inactive applications submittals and fees to the applicant after six months of inactivity when no audit was conducted. SSPC will assess a \$750 USD administrative processing fee that will be deducted from the administrative fee and audit deposit initially submitted with the application.

For program members who withdraw from the QP program during a certification term, SSPC will retain the entire administrative fee submitted at the beginning of the certification period and return any unused audit deposit.

You must pay post-audit fees for QP7 deficiency audits or additional audit expenses when they are due. Failure to pay in a timely manner will result in a six-month suspension from the program and public notification of your suspension. If you do not pay the fees after the suspension period, you will be de-qualified and have to reapply for QP7 qualification. When reapplying, you will have to pay all applicable fees and all past due fees.

NOTE: *Maintenance applications are due December 15. SSPC will assess a \$500 late fee for maintenance applications received by SSPC between December 16 and March 31.*

VII. Submittal Procedure

To avoid delay and confusion, gather and submit your application package as follows:

- Type or clearly print all entries on the QP7 application form provided above.
- Be certain all items on the form are answered completely and accurately.
- Send the original one hardcopy of the application package to SSPC. As stated earlier, electronic submittals are encouraged and welcomed, provided we can open your files.
 - We suggest you keep a copy on hand for your own use at the audit. The auditor will return the submittal to you at the end of the audit. All other materials will be kept by SSPC.
- Clearly identify submittal items included with your QP7 application based on the applicable QP certification requirements. Secure all pages to minimize chances of loss or separation.
 - SSPC strongly recommends arranging your submittal package in a binder with tabs identifying each evaluation item. If you are creating PDFs to e-mail, you may bookmark the pages of the document.
- Determine and send the non-refundable introductory program fee/deposit as described in **Section VI: Introductory Program Fee Payments**. Make check payable to SSPC Painting Contractor Introductory Program (QP7).
- Mail or e-mail (certification@sspc.org) the entire application package to:

SSPC: The Society for Protective Coatings
Attn.: Corporate Certification Program Manager
800 Trumbull Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15205

VIII. Evaluation Process

Your company is evaluated against the non-field audit checklist items for the QP certification that you ultimately want to achieve once you have the requisite experience to apply. Remember: the QP7 qualification audit does not require a visit to an active job site.

Upon SSPC's acceptance of your application and submittals, your package of information is forwarded to the SSPC auditor. Working together, you and your auditor mutually agree upon a date and time for the office audit visit and confirm it in writing. During the office visit the auditor:

- Confirms completeness of data submitted in the application package;

- Interviews key supervisory personnel and selected shop and field employees including the chief executive officer, president or chief operating officer;
- Observes and rates company organization using the standard program guidelines and rating procedures found in the applicable QP certification package and audit checklist;
- Examines and rates equipment and facilities; and
- Schedules the exit interview to review audit findings.

At the conclusion of the audit, the auditor will schedule an exit interview with your supervisory or management personnel to review the audit and address deficiencies that are rated less than “2.” The auditor will issue a deficiency schedule for the management representative to sign if there are any deficiencies. The signature indicates that the company has been presented with and is aware of the results of the audit. Refusal to sign the deficiency schedule results in denial of qualification.

A. Cancellation of Audit

If you cancel the audit, request a change in the agreed-upon date or fail to make management staff available for auditing, you will be responsible for any expenses incurred by SSPC as a result of the cancellation.

B. Corrective Action

The program provides a 45-day period for applicants who have not attained an adequate score to:

- Submit a corrective action plan;
- Make corrections for any deficient area; and
- Ask for a re-evaluation.

SSPC will withhold qualification until:

- Corrections are made and accepted by SSPC;
- Required procedures are revised; and
- A passing score is achieved during a follow-up evaluation at your headquarters.

C. Determination of Status

At the conclusion of the evaluation process described in **Section VIII: Evaluation Process**, the SSPC designated program auditor will submit audit findings to the SSPC corporate certification program manager. SSPC will make the final decision

regarding your status. Those decisions are either to **Confer QP7 Qualification including Category** or **Deny Qualification**.

Confer QP7 Qualification including Category indicates that your company achieved the required scores. SSPC will subsequently issue a letter identifying the contractor by name and by location of the home office stating that the contractor has met the requirements of this procedure and has completed “Step 1” in the process of becoming SSPC QP certified.

Deny Qualification indicates that your company has not attained scores adequate to achieve introductory program qualification. You then have 45 days after written notification of audit results to submit an acceptable corrective action plan to address deficiencies and request that SSPC re-evaluate your company – at your expense – to verify implementation of your corrective action plan.

D. Qualification Period

This qualification is limited to **a one-time 18-consecutive calendar month period** following initial qualification or first eligible QP job site audit opportunity – whichever comes first. SSPC may grant extensions beyond the initial 18-month period for exceptional circumstances.

E. Appeal Procedure

The auditor will – during the exit interview – explain any deficiencies cited during the audit.

If you dispute the results of the audit you may appeal using the following steps:

Step 1: Notify SSPC in writing within 10 working days after the exit interview, specifically identifying those items you dispute and why you dispute the results of the audit.

Step 2: SSPC will evaluate your written appeal and notify you in writing of the results within 30 calendar days of receipt. SSPC appeal evaluations will result in either acceptance of your written appeal (vacating or reducing an audit deficiency) or denial of the appeal (sustaining the deficiency). Upon the denial of any appeal, the contractor has the option to accept the SSPC resolution and submit a **corrective action plan (CAP)**, which may or may not require a follow-up audit to verify CAP implementation.

Step 3: The contractor can continue the appeal process by requesting an informal conference in writing and within 10 business days of an SSPC appeal denial. The informal conference will be held at SSPC headquarters in Pittsburgh, PA to permit the contractor to further explain its position and request a settlement.

Step 4: The final option for the contractor wishing to continue with the appeal is to utilize the existing **disciplinary action criteria (DAC)** arbitration panel procedure.

NOTE: *Contractors who do not appeal audit findings can still appeal disciplinary action taken by SSPC as a result of failing an audit. Use procedures 1-4 above to appeal a suspension resulting from a failed audit.*

The arbitration panel referenced in **Step 4** and organized in accordance with SSPC DAC arbitration procedures will hear evidence and make a final decision on any outstanding appeals not resolved by **Steps 1-3**. If the arbitration panel rules in the contractor's favor, the cost of all fees and expenses associated with the arbitration are shared equally by the contract and SSPC. If the arbitration panel rules against the contractor, the contractor is responsible for paying all arbitration fees and expenses.

Customers may contact SSPC directly to comment at any time regarding contractor job performance. All replies/comments are treated as confidential and may be used only as a component in determining qualification reconfirmation or verification of critical faults under the DAC.

F. Obtaining a Painting Contract and Scheduling a Full Audit

Qualification to QP7 requires SSPC to conduct an audit performed at the contractor's offices. In order to achieve SSPC contractor certification, contracting companies must also complete a full audit consisting of an office audit and a field audit at a job site that meets requirements of the certification category sought (i.e., QP1, QP2, QP6, QP8 or QP9).

A company qualified to the QP7 procedure that is awarded a painting contract meeting criteria for the full audit required for SSPC certification must notify SSPC through the job notification website at <http://www.sspc.org/qp-job-note> within 15 working days of receiving the contract award, then follow-up with the SSPC corporate certification program manager to schedule a field audit.

Full audits may be scheduled within 60 days of the company completing the experience requirements for certification. The audit will be conducted at the company's expense and will evaluate the company's quality program

implementation including office and field operations. The full audit is a requirement for – but not a guarantee of – advancement to certification. Failure to notify SSPC in a timely manner of projects that could qualify for a full audit puts the company at risk of having its QP7 qualification expire without completing the requirements to advance from QP7 qualification to SSPC QP certification.

G. Eligibility Status

Contracting companies that achieve SSPC certification status while qualified to this procedure forfeit QP7 qualification. New companies affiliated in any way with formerly certified companies that have had qualification suspended or revoked as a result of disciplinary actions as defined in the PCCP **disciplinary action criteria (DAC)** or companies that have previously violated program rules are ineligible for qualification to this procedure.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Failure to cooperate with the program auditor or program manager, or failure to provide access to data, personnel or pertinent office records shall be sufficient cause for denial, suspension or revocation of your company's qualification status at the program administrator's discretion.*

IX. Special Provisions

A. Major Changes in Company's Organization

Introductory contracting companies are required to notify the SSPC program administrator within 30 days of any major organizational or name changes. Examples of major changes include but are not limited to:

- Change in ownership;
- Partnership/joint venture; or
- Change in executive management (e.g., president, CEO, general manager).

The notification shall include:

- Specified details about changes;
- Revised organizational and responsibility chart;
- Effective dates of change;
- Names of company officers; and
- Any change in federal or state tax ID number.

NOTE: *If a company changes federal or state tax ID numbers or is incorporated in a new state, it will automatically have to reapply as a new contracting company. If it is a simple change of name, (i.e., "John R. Doe Co., Inc." to "J.R. Doe, Inc.") and the company remains incorporated in the same state with the same tax ID numbers, a simple transfer of qualification may be authorized.*

Failure to notify the program administrator of any major changes within the required time period will result in an automatic disqualification.

B. Suspension of Qualification for Non-Payment

Failure to pay all fees in a timely manner will result in a six-month suspension from the program and public notification of the suspension. SSPC will notify a firm of its suspension if it fails to respond within three business days to the final (second) notice of non-payment. SSPC will also withhold issuing qualifying letters for initial applicants who pass the evaluation until all fees are paid.

X. Definitions

Auditor: The SSPC-designated program auditor who has completed an SSPC-approved training program, and who is responsible for reviewing applicant submittals, conducting the on-site evaluation and reporting results to SSPC – including a recommendation on whether qualification should be conferred.

Qualification: The procedure by which written assurance is given that a product or service conforms to a standard or specification.

Qualification Categories: This procedure defines four qualification categories:

1. Surface Preparation & Coating Application – Industrial or Marine Steel Structures (Field)
2. Hazardous Paint Removal in Conjunction with Coating Application
3. Architectural Coating Application – Commercial & Institutional Structures
4. Surface Preparation & Coating Application – Industrial or Marine Concrete Structures

Complex Structures: Industrial steel structures containing a variety of shapes and configurations such as metal-producing and rolling mills, ships and other marine vessels and structures; bridges and towers; processing facilities including chemical and petrochemical processing plants and distribution facilities; pulp and paper mills; power generation plants and substations, food and beverage plants and terminals, water processing and waste treatment facilities; storage tanks and other industrial and marine

steel structures. Complex structures also include any steel components affixed to the structure such as truss beams and support structures, etc.

Commercial/Institutional Structures: Those structures that encompass a wide range of building types and interior and exterior configurations. Architectural coatings are normally applied for aesthetic purposes, protection or signage. Examples include but are not limited to retail stores, shopping centers; office buildings; schools, colleges and universities; libraries, institutional buildings, public and military housing; apartment buildings; warehouses and product storage and distribution centers, medical and dental facilities; sports and recreational facilities; and airports, rail and bus stations.

Cementitious Surfaces: Those surfaces that feature thick- and thin-film polymer coatings, surfacings or linings on concrete and other cementitious surfaces.

Evaluation Items: Specific facts or evidence an auditor reviews when assessing an applicant's required information.

Full Audit: A full audit consists of an office audit and one or more field job site visits to sample the contractor's capabilities.

Ratings: The SSPC auditor rates your company on all applicable* evaluation items. Only findings rated "1" or "2" are reported on the deficiency schedule that is given to the auditee at the closing interview. Lack of a finding for an evaluation item means that the auditor rated it "3" or did not rate the item.

* More items are evaluated on initial and full audits than are evaluated on maintenance, spot check or corrective action follow-up audits.

Ratings Defined:

The rating of "1" (a major CAR or deficiency) indicates:

- a) The required training, written program, practice or procedure is non-existent;
- b) The required training or written program is inadequate; and
- c) The required practice or procedure has not been in place for the minimum amount of time (six consecutive production months) or it has been in place sporadically (e.g., less than 2/3 implemented).

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Typically, auditors will not issue major deficiencies for isolated breakdowns in a contractor's quality system. However, there are exceptions. For example, auditors will issue a rating of "1" when they observe one or more safety violations or safety hazards that could result in an injury or serious incident. An obvious example would be a person working without appropriate fall protection as*

required by the contractor's safety and health plan and/or governing regulations.

Auditors will also issue a rating of "1" if they discover one or more unauthorized deviations from contract requirements or deviations from good painting practices found in the paint shop, shipyard or field job site.

The rating of "2" (a minor CAR or deficiency) indicates:

The training or written program is adequate but requires minor revision. Examples include a practice or procedure that is in place with isolated instances of nonconformance (no more than 1/3 of the time), lack of practice or documentation due to personnel turnover, non-performance by field personnel, personal hardship and natural disaster.

The rating of "3" indicates:

A contractor – based on audit sampling – consistently adheres to specific training and written program requirements, and required practices and procedures consistently meet the letter of the standard.

When there are no audit findings, it means that all items evaluated during the audit were rated "3."

A **corrective action report (CAR)** using the SSPC automated CAP form found on the SSPC website at <http://www.sspc.org/qp-cap> is required for each major deficiency (rating of "1") found by the auditor. Remedial action for a major CAR requires submitting a corrective action report and then undergoing an on-site audit to confirm that the contractor has corrected the deficiency and implemented the corrective action plan. With the exception of initial audits, remedial action for a minor CAR requires that the auditor confirm remediation at the next audit. Minor CARs that are not remediated by the contractor by the next audit turn into a major CAR or deficiency.

Initial audits require corrective action report submission for all deficiencies cited (major or minor).

Occasionally, the auditor will note a "concern" on an audit report. A concern is not a rating. It is simply a statement for the contractor to consider for its own business purposes. No response is required for a "concern."

SSPC is committed to a fair and transparent Complaints and Appeals process regarding our certifications. If you would like to learn more about this process, or to communicate an issue to our Certification Body please contact certification@sspc.org and describe your issue and/or request a phone call back. We will respond within two business days to your email communication. You may also call us at 877-281-7772 to speak to someone about your issue.