

# Buildings Incorporating Steel Building Systems: Responsibilities of the Parties Involved

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# BUILDINGS INCORPORATING STEEL BUILDING SYSTEMS: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This bulletin outlines responsibilities prescribed by the National Building Code of Canada (NBC) for various parties involved in the design and construction of buildings incorporating Steel Building Systems (SBS).

A Steel Building System is a building system in which steel structural and cladding components plus applicable appurtenances are engineered to facilitate mass production and to permit assembly in various combinations. Steel Building Systems are intended primarily for buildings with commercial, industrial or institutional occupancies.

This bulletin is issued solely for general guidance. Due to the variability of contractual arrangements and statutory requirements, it is recommended that legal advice be obtained in actual situations.

## 2. THE PARTIES DEFINED

For the purposes of this bulletin, the parties involved in the design and construction of buildings incorporating Steel Building Systems are considered to be (a) the *Owner*, (b) the *Constructor*, (c) the *Designer (of the Structure)*, and (d) the *SBS Manufacturer*.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES AS PRESCRIBED BY NBC

The Administrative Requirements for use with the National Building Code 1980 delineate the duties and responsibilities of the *Owner* and of the *Constructor*. In NBC Part 2, General Requirements, the *Designer (of the Structure)* and the *SBS Manufacturer* are charged with certain responsibilities. Those of the *SBS Manufacturer* are inferred from various statements contained in the NBC and its associated documents, since the specific term "*SBS Manufacturer*" does not appear in the NBC.

In brief, the *Owner* is responsible for obtaining all required permits and approvals to build; for giving any required notice to the building official; for providing all required information such as test data, inspection reports, etc. to the appropriate authority; and generally for complying with all the terms and conditions under which the building permit or any other required permit or approval is obtained.

The *Constructor* is responsible for observing all construction safety requirements; for not intruding on public property without permission; and is responsible jointly and severally with the *Owner* for any work actually undertaken.

The *Designer (of the Structure)* is *professionally* responsible, on behalf of the *Owner*, for the structural design of the building. He, or another suitably qualified person, is also responsible for review of the construction to determine conformance with the design. (For some buildings covered by NBC Part 9 the designer need not be a professional engineer or architect.)

The *SBS Manufacturer* is responsible for the design and fabrication of the components which he furnishes. The designer of SBS structural components is *professionally* responsible on behalf of the *SBS Manufacturer*.

## 4. ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Buildings incorporating Steel Building Systems represent a departure from traditional building methods. Thus it is natural that the roles and relationships based on the use of traditional building methods may require some modification in order to be workable under different circumstances. This is particularly true in respect of the relationships between the *SBS Manufacturer*, the *Designer (of the Structure)*, and the *Constructor*. And, where the roles of *Designer* and *Constructor* are assumed by a single entity, known as a *Design-Builder*, the relationship is a further departure from the traditional.

The following will clarify some of the inter-related activities and obligations.

1. The *Owner* has two basic options. He may retain a professional engineer or architect to accept responsibility for the design and for review of construction as *Designer (of the Structure)*. In this case, the *Owner* will also retain a *Constructor* to undertake the actual construction. Alternatively, the *Owner* may retain a *Design-Builder* who undertakes to provide both professional design and construction services. With either option the products of an *SBS Manufacturer* may be used.
2. Where a building incorporates a Steel Building System, the *SBS Manufacturer* designs and fabricates the structural components and connections, the cladding, and certain accessories such as doors, vents and windows. **The *SBS Manufacturer* is responsible for ensuring that the components he supplies are designed and fabricated in accordance with the building regulations and other specified criteria.**
3. The *SBS Manufacturer* provides erection drawings designating the components of the Steel Building System and showing how the system is to be assembled. **In general, however, the *SBS Manufacturer* does not assume the role of erector and therefore is not involved with erection nor with the inspection of erected components.**
4. The *SBS Manufacturer* does not design any part of the building he does not supply such as, footings, foundation walls, earthwork and interiors.
5. In most cases the *SBS Manufacturer* does not design the overall building, construct it, take part in the on-site review of construction, or become directly involved with the *Owner*, except ethically in his determination to supply quality products. It is inappropriate, therefore, to depict him as

either the *Designer (of the Structure)* or as *Constructor*. Both roles involve duties and responsibilities which are outside his scope as a manufacturer.

6. Responsibility as *Designer (of the Structure)* resides either with the professional engineer or architect retained by the *Owner*, or with the *Design-Builder*, as applicable.
7. In the case of the *Design-Builder*, the role of *Designer (of the Structure)* and of *Constructor* are in the same hands. The *Design-Builder* is responsible to the *Owner* for both design and construction including earthwork, foundations, superstructure, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, etc. When SBS components are utilized the liability of the *Design-Builder* as *Designer (of the Structure)* is limited to the specification of appropriate loads to be carried, the specification of the design criteria and the clear definition of the scope of the work to be provided by the *SBS Manufacturer*. As *Constructor*, the *Design-Builder* is responsible for erection of the SBS components in accordance with the erection drawings provided by the *SBS Manufacturer*. The *Design-Builder* is also responsible for review of the construction, as *Designer (of the Structure)*.
8. Where the *Owner* retains an architect or engineer as *Designer (of the Structure)* and SBS components are utilized, the responsibility of the architect or engineer is limited in this regard to the proper specification of the work to be supplied by the *SBS Manufacturer*; scrutiny to ensure that the specification is met; and review of the construction to ensure that the *Constructor* has erected the SBS components properly.
9. The *Designer (of the Structure)*, whether *Designer-Builder*, architect or engineer, is responsible for specifying to the *SBS Manufacturer* the Codes and Standards to govern the design; and all design loads such as snow loads (including coefficients and drift conditions), wind loads, collateral loads, and any other superimposed loads which the structure is required to sustain.
10. The *SBS Manufacturer* will supply a *Letter of Certification* stating the design criteria used and the loads assumed in design. This will be dated, signed and sealed by the professional engineer responsible, on behalf of the *SBS Manufacturer*, for the design of the components to be supplied. The *Letter of Certification* places sole responsibility for the design of the components with the *SBS Manufacturer*. It is therefore not necessary for the *Designer (of the Structure)* or the building official to spend time in checking the shop drawings and calculations of the *SBS Manufacturer* for conformance to the design, since full responsibility for the components to be supplied is already accepted. **Thus the**

**most important document relating to design to be furnished by the SBS Manufacturer, and the only one really necessary to establish responsibility, is the Letter of Certification.**

11. The party responsible for review of construction, by referring to the erection drawings supplied by the *SBS Manufacturer*, may verify that the construction of the Steel Building System conforms to the design simply by comparing the specified part numbers, connections and assembly details with those of the in-place structure.
12. The *SBS Manufacturer* is not in the business of offering professional engineering services to the general public and generally does not hold a "certificate of authorization" as issued by many provincial engineering associations. Professional engineers hold personal responsibility on behalf of the *SBS Manufacturer*.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES:

- (1) Erection drawings provided by the *SBS Manufacturer* should include a statement of responsibilities accepted and excluded in supplying components. Unless the *SBS Manufacturer* undertakes the role of *Designer (of the Structure)* and/or erector of the Steel Building System, such a statement might be as follows:

" \_\_\_\_\_ (Name)

accepts responsibility only for the design, fabrication and performance of the components shown on this drawing in accordance with the specified design criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ (Name)

is not responsible for errors, omissions or damages incurred in the erection of the components shown on this drawing, nor for inspection of erected components to ascertain same."

- (2) Under normal circumstances, the *SBS Manufacturer* does not furnish fabrication details of the parts supplied, since the checking of such details for conformance with the design is an internal responsibility. In unusual circumstances, where fabrication details are required to be furnished as a special requirement, a note should be added to each drawing released, to protect against misuse, as follows:

"Design of the components shown on this drawing is the property of \_\_\_\_\_ (Name)

Reproduction of this drawing or manufacture of components shown on this drawing, without permission, is not allowed."



The Canadian Sheet Steel Building Institute, the national association of the structural sheet steel industry, promotes the use of sheet steel in building construction through engineered design and standards of quality and performance. Activities focus on sheet steel building products and steel building systems for commercial, industrial and institutional applications and similar products and systems for farm applications.

The Institute provides information regarding the standards of design, fabrication and erection, and offers technical assistance in the use of cold formed and pre-engineered steel products. The CSSBI also represents its members in technical matters connected with government, and provides liaison with organizations such as Canadian Standards Association and National Research Council.

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