

NSSA ACCREDITED PROFESSIONAL AND CERTIFIED INSPECTORS CODE OF CONDUCT

Individuals with either NSSA Accredited Professional status or NSSA Certified Inspector status (NSSA AP/CI's) are obligated to meet the following expectations. NSSA's Board of Directors reserves the right to revoke NSSA AP/CI status from any individuals for any failure, or any pattern of failure, to comply with this Code of Conduct, as judged solely by the NSSA Board of Directors. However, NSSA's Board of Directors is not required to discover all such failures or even revoke NSSA AP/CI status for all such failures (for example, non-substantive failures). Any NSSA AP/CI's should contact NSSA's Director of Operations if they are not sure how to apply this Code of Conduct in practice. And furthermore, NSSA AP/CI's that wish to have their NSSA AP/CI status removed voluntarily, for any reason, may do so at any time by notifying NSSA's Director of Operations in writing.

1. NSSA AP/CI's are required to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws.
2. NSSA AP/CI's are required to notify NSSA's Board of Directors within 60 days after receiving any disciplinary action by a state licensing board or any ruling of negligence in professional practice by a court of law.
3. NSSA AP/CI Architects are required to comply with the most recently published American Institute of Architects "Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct". NSSA AP/CI Engineers should comply with the most recently published National Society of Professional Engineers "Code of Ethics for Engineers".
4. NSSA AP's that wish to renew their NSSA AP status are required to meet NSSA's continuing education requirements before their NSSA AP status expires.
5. NSSA AP's are required to provide the designation "NSSA AP" at least one time on each set of construction documents issued with the design of a storm shelter. NSSA AP's are encouraged to provide the designation "NSSA AP" below their seal, if permitted by state law, everywhere their seal occurs on all documents related to storm shelters within their specialty design discipline(s). NSSA AP's are permitted to provide the designation "NSSA AP" anywhere on construction documents (even if there is not a storm shelter) as long as the manner of the designation does not mislead readers into thinking that the NSSA AP has a specialty which the NSSA AP does not have.

Commentary:

NSSA AP's are encouraged to show the designation "NSSA AP" on all other professional documentation (e.g. websites, social media, business cards, resumes, construction documents and reports), except where it would be misleading anyone into believing that they have an NSSA AP design specialty that they have not yet attained (e.g. an NSSA AP with Mechanical Engineer specialty placing "NSSA AP" on their resume when seeking a position as both a Mechanical Engineer of Record and an Electrical Engineer of Record). NSSA AP's should not place the designation "NSSA AP" below their seal on any documents that are not within their specialty design discipline (e.g. an NSSA AP with only a Mechanical Engineer specialty sealing Electrical Engineering drawings or specifications).

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There have been many documented cases where design professionals have incorrectly believed that their designs conform to the minimum standards of ICC 500, peer reviewers have misunderstood their role as required by ICC 500 and peer reviewers have not identified nonconforming conditions when reviewing storm shelters. Knowledge and understanding of ICC 500 is essential to designing and peer reviewing storm shelters. Accreditation as an NSSA AP demonstrates knowledge and understanding of ICC 500. By always providing the "NSSA AP" designation below the seal on storm shelter documentation, we allow Building Officials, Owners, Peer Reviewers, and other Design Professionals to differentiate between design professionals who have attained the NSSA AP status and those who have not. Building Officials might think it appropriate to scrutinize more closely a set of documents prepared by professionals that have not attained NSSA AP status. Owners, such as public entities in qualifications-based selection of design professionals, may consider professionals that have attained the NSSA AP status to be more qualified than those that have not. As storm shelters require an elevated level of coordination between disciplines, NSSA AP's might think it appropriate to perform a higher level of inter-disciplinary quality control when working with professionals that have not attained the NSSA AP status. And, peer reviewers may want to charge a higher fee, or charge an hourly rate with a higher limit on approved hours, for reviewing construction documents prepared by professionals that have not attained NSSA AP status.

6. NSSA AP/CI's are required to not place the "NSSA AP" or "NSSA CI" designation on any professional documentation or present themselves as an NSSA AP/CI if their status has expired and a renewal has not been approved by NSSA. Furthermore, NSSA AP/CI's are required to not place the "NSSA AP" or "NSSA CI" designation on any professional documentation or present themselves as an NSSA AP/CI if their status has been revoked by the NSSA Board of Directors.
7. An NSSA AP/CI that becomes aware that they have failed to comply with this Code of Conduct, at any point in the past, is required to resolve the consequences of their failure(s) using their judgment.

Commentary:

As an example, an NSSA AP realizes that the design of a storm shelter that they prepared and submitted has already been built with a design error that they made. The NSSA AP in this example notifies the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) that they believe that the error may be substantive. The AHJ may deem the deviation to be non-substantive (not requiring remediation) or they may require remediation. It may be necessary for a design professional to pay for the costs of any remediation using their errors and omissions insurance policy. However, NSSA's Board of Directors does not need to be notified in this instance. It was an error made in good faith and it is being actively resolved.

8. If an NSSA AP/CI has knowledge that another NSSA AP/CI has failed to comply with this Code of Conduct, the NSSA AP/CI with that knowledge is required to notify the NSSA AP/CI that has failed to comply with this Code of Conduct. The NSSA AP/CI with that knowledge is also permitted to, but not expected or required to, notify the NSSA Director of Operations. NSSA's Director of Operations will attempt to gather relevant data and then present the case to NSSA's Board of Directors so that the Board can consider revoking NSSA AP/CI status.

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Commentary:

NSSA expects that NSSA AP/CI's as professionals, when notified, will address any of their own failures to comply with this Code of Conduct that they may have committed. And, NSSA respects the fact that it is often difficult to resolve real-world concerns to everyone's satisfaction, generally wanting to give NSSA AP/CI's broad discretion in how they choose to resolve any concerns that others may have regarding their actions. However, if an NSSA AP/CI believes that another NSSA AP/CI is willfully negligent, being aware of a substantive life-safety concern associated with their actions but actively indicating they will not take any action to resolve the concern, NSSA's Board of Directors wants to know that. NSSA's Board of Directors will generally want to revoke the NSSA AP/CI status of anyone who is willfully negligent; however, NSSA's Board of Directors should not be a place to debate the finer points of storm shelter design or inspection practices. It is also important to note that this item refers to having "knowledge" and not simply a "belief" or "question about" a concern. But, any NSSA AP/CI is welcome to notify NSSA's Director of Operations if they have any concerns, great or small. Sometimes a significant failure, even if made in good faith and being actively resolved, is a signal that a professional is grossly incompetent, warranting revocation of their NSSA AP/CI status.

9. NSSA AP/CI's are required to respond in a timely manner to any inquiries made by NSSA's Board of Directors regarding a claim that an NSSA AP/CI has failed to meet this Code of Conduct.
10. If NSSA's Board of Directors revokes an NSSA AP/CI's status, the former NSSA AP/CI is required to accept the Board's decision as final and not disparage NSSA, NSSA's Board of Directors, NSSA Staff, or any other individuals involved in the revocation.
11. NSSA AP/CI's and former NSSA AP/CI's are required to hold NSSA, NSSA's Board of Directors and NSSA's Staff harmless for any and all actions made by NSSA AP/CI's.
12. NSSA AP's are required to notify NSSA's Director of Operations in writing within 60 days after any change in contact information.