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## Section 3

### APPROVED PRODUCT LIST CERTIFICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

#### 3.1 PURPOSE

The objective of this section is to describe the Department's APL product certification and approval process to applicants, suppliers, and end-users. Conditions for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending, and withdrawing certification are also included.

#### 3.2 GRANTING CERTIFICATION OR APPROVAL

All official traffic control signals and devices, and ancillary devices or system equipment shall be evaluated by the TERL and certified/approved by the State Traffic Operations Engineer. Granting certification/approval of the applicant's product is based on meeting applicable specifications. In addition, during the course of a product evaluation, issues concerning safety/use/maintenance of a product, failure to meet common industry standards, or other issues may arise that are not explicitly addressed in the specifications. In such cases, the TERL may require that these issues be resolved prior to product certification/approval.

All application forms referenced below can be downloaded at:

[http://www.dot.state.fl.us/trafficoperations/Traf\\_Sys/APL-Approval-Process.shtm](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/trafficoperations/Traf_Sys/APL-Approval-Process.shtm)

Applicants wishing to have products listed on the APL for the first time shall follow the three-step process outlined below. The TERL responsibilities are also described for each step.

- (1) **Step 1: Request for Product Consideration (RFPC) Submittal and Review:**  
To begin the process, the applicant shall submit a completed RFPC application. The TERL will review the provided information to determine whether the product has benefit to the state and requires APL listing. The applicant can expect a response within 14 calendar days following receipt of the application. If the product requires listing on the APL, the applicant will be instructed to proceed to Step 2 and given a list of all applicable specifications to meet. Note that as described in **Section 8**, another outcome of Step 1 may be to follow a traffic control device permit process. If the product is out of the APL scope or is within scope but clearly not meeting standards, the applicant will be notified that certification is refused and be given reasons for the decision.

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- (2) **Step 2: Acceptable Quality System List (AQSL) Application Submittal and Review:** The applicant shall submit a completed AQSL application. Contract manufacturers or designers utilized by applicants may be required to follow the same evaluation process depending on the extent of their activities. All required attachments, as noted in the application, must be provided with the AQSL application form. The applicant can expect a response within 30 calendar days following receipt of the application via an evaluation report (including deficiencies, as applicable). Acceptance of the quality management system is based on meeting the quality system specification listed in **Section 6**.

Applicants must have their quality system accepted before products can be evaluated. Upon quality system acceptance, the applicant will receive a final evaluation report, be instructed to proceed to Step 3a, and its quality system will be listed on the AQSL.

The quality system evaluation process is detailed in **Section 5**.

- (3) **Step 3a: APL Application Submittal and Review:** The applicant shall submit a completed APL application. All required information, as noted in the application (including applicable compliance matrices and third-party or first-party test data stipulated in matrices), must be provided with the APL application form. The applicant can expect a response on application completeness and conformance with applicable product specifications or other requirements within 14 calendar days following receipt of the application. Once the application is deemed complete and no apparent nonconformities are noted, the applicant will be instructed to proceed to Step 3b.
- (4) **Step 3b: Product Sample Submittal, Evaluation and Certification/Approval:** After Steps 1 through 3a have been successfully completed, the applicant will typically be notified to provide a product sample to the TERL for evaluation. The sample must be a production unit representative of the entire line or group of products to be certified/approved. It must also be submitted with all accessory components necessary for full operation. All costs of freight and shipping must be at the applicant's expense. The applicant can expect a response regarding product evaluation within 45 calendar days following receipt of the sample.
- (a) The APL application will be reviewed for content and the product evaluated against all applicable specifications. The TERL will communicate any deficiencies to the applicant via an evaluation report. If the product fails the evaluation, or is found to have numerous or serious specification violations, the product may not be re-submitted for up to 90 calendar days from the date of notification of such failure. Following the second product failure, the applicant may have to wait for up to one year before resubmitting the product.
- (b) Once the TERL has determined that a product meets applicable

specifications and requirements, a recommendation will be made to the State Traffic Operations Engineer to certify/approve the product. If the recommendation is accepted, a certification/approval letter, including a certification/approval number, and a completed certification agreement will both be provided to the applicant and the product will be listed on the APL. The applicant will be provided a certification agreement to review and sign before a certification/approval letter can be issued (refer to **Section 9.5**).

### 3.3 MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION OR APPROVAL

Maintaining certification or approval shall be accomplished by the following:

- (1) Maintaining compliance to the relevant product/quality system standards and certification/approval requirements including re-certification under revised standards (refer to **Section 3.5**). This involves successful and prompt resolution of any required corrective actions to maintain compliance. Examples of deficiencies requiring corrective actions are listed in **Section 3.6**; and
- (2) Utilizing a surveillance program, including a re-evaluation and re-acceptance of the supplier's quality management system (typically performed every four years). To begin the re-evaluation process, the supplier shall submit a completed AQSL application (downloadable from the same link listed in **Section 3.2**).

Contract manufacturers or designers utilized by applicants may be required to follow the same re-evaluation process depending on the extent of their activities. All required attachments, as noted in the application, must be provided with the AQSL application form. The applicant can expect a response within 30 calendar days following receipt of the application via an evaluation report (including deficiencies, as applicable). Re-acceptance of the quality management system is based on meeting the quality system specification of **Section 6**.

Upon quality system re-acceptance, the applicant will receive a final evaluation report, and its quality system will continue to be listed on the AQSL.

The quality system re-evaluation process is detailed in **Section 5**.

### 3.4 EXTENDING CERTIFICATION OR APPROVAL

- (1) Suppliers with products currently listed on the APL that wish to extend (add) new products or modify existing certified/approved products shall follow the process outlined in **Section 3.2** beginning with Step 1. Step 2 may be bypassed if the supplier's quality system has already been accepted in relation to the products proposed for extension or modification. Steps 3a and 3b requirements may be reduced for the supplier under certain conditions explained in this section. In all cases, conditions for maintaining product certification or approval as defined in

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**Section 3.3** must also be met for granting an extension of product certification.

For modification of a certified/approved product, all product modifications must be indicated in the RFPC application. The RFPC application will be reviewed to determine the significance of the proposed modifications to the certified/approved product or the significance of the changes between the certified/approved product and the new product submitted for extension. The supplier can expect a response within 14 calendar days following receipt of the application. The response may include a request for information to make a final determination of significance.

- (2) If differences between the existing certified/approved product and the product submitted for extension or modification are deemed significant, suppliers shall follow the complete process outlined in **Section 3.2**. The TERL responsibilities described in **Section 3.2** also apply.
- (3) If differences between the existing certified/approved product and the product submitted for extension or modification are not deemed significant, the supplier will be asked to provide extension material which will consist of a completed APL application form and may also include product test data or a product sample. If a product sample is requested, it must be a production unit representative of the entire line or group of products to be certified/approved. It must also be submitted with all accessory components necessary for full operation. In addition, all costs of freight and shipping must be at the applicant's expense. Following receipt of the requested extension material, the supplier can expect a response regarding the evaluation within 45 calendar days following receipt of the material. The TERL will communicate any deficiencies to the supplier via an evaluation report.

For product differences deemed non-significant, once the TERL has determined that a product meets applicable specifications and requirements, a recommendation will be made to the State Traffic Operations Engineer to certify/approve the product. If the recommendation is accepted, a revised certification/approval letter (using the same certification/approval number as that in the original certification/approval), and a completed certification agreement will both be provided to the supplier and the product will be listed on the APL. The supplier will be provided a certification agreement to review and sign before a certification/approval letter can be issued (refer to **Section 9.5**).

- (4) Suppliers with products currently listed on the APL wishing to extend (add) or modify accepted quality systems/facilities handling product design/development, manufacturing/testing, or customer service shall follow the process outlined in Step 2 of **Section 3.2**. Conditions for maintaining product certification or approval as defined in **Section 3.3** must also be met for granting an extension of quality system acceptance.

### 3.5 RE-CERTIFICATION OR RE-APPROVAL UNDER REVISED STANDARDS

The Department regularly revises specifications to keep pace with new product technology and revised standards.

- (1) If the latest product specification revisions are deemed more stringent than earlier versions, the TERL will notify suppliers of affected products and specific revisions. Time depending on the extent of the specification change and the type of product, will be allowed for suppliers to implement changes to products as needed to become compliant with revised specifications. The supplier shall submit a completed product compliance matrix corresponding to the revised specification. Upon review of the matrix, additional information (documentation and/or a product sample representative of the entire line or group of products to be re-certified/re-approved) may be required of the supplier. The product will remain listed on the APL if it is deemed to meet the revised specification. In this case, a new certification/approval letter will not be issued. If not, the product will continue to be listed on the APL with a disclaimer that it can no longer be used after the effective date of the revised specification (reduction of certification).
- (2) Compliance with revisions concerning the quality system specification listed in **Section 6** is evaluated as part of the surveillance program (see **Section 3.3**). This program includes a re-evaluation and re-acceptance of the supplier's quality management system (typically performed every four years) based on meeting the latest specification requirements listed in **Section 6**.

### 3.6 TERMINATING, REDUCING, SUSPENDING AND WITHDRAWING CERTIFICATION OR APPROVAL

Deficiencies in product and/or supplier performance, supplier's quality assurance and fabrication procedures, and lack of compliance with product approval/certification requirements will be evaluated. Specific examples of deficiencies include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Failure of the product to perform satisfactorily or to meet current standards and specifications;
- (b) Failure of the supplier to cooperate with the ongoing surveillance program;
- (c) Failure of the supplier to immediately notify the TERL of any modification, alteration, or obsolete nature of a listed product; and
- (d) Failure of the supplier to resolve improper use of the certificate (i.e. misleading publications or advertisement).

The degree of action taken by the TERL (i.e. reducing, suspending and withdrawing

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certification or approval) will vary with the degree of non-conformity and the effect of the deficiency on product safety and intended use of the product. Although the reduction/suspension/withdrawal process is typically escalated as follows, any of the below penalties can be applied independently of the typical sequence shown:

**(1) 1<sup>st</sup> Action – Corrective Action Request**

The TERL will issue a Corrective Action Request to the supplier to resolve the deficiency. Under this action, product certification/approval or supplier's quality system acceptance is not affected. Upon receipt, the TERL will review the corrective action response and supporting documentation and notify the supplier on the adequacy of the corrective action.

**(2) 2<sup>nd</sup> Action – Notice of Corrective Action**

Failure to provide a satisfactory corrective action will lead to escalation of the Corrective Action Request. In this case, the TERL will issue an official Notice of Corrective Action to the supplier to resolve the deficiency. Under this action, product certification/approval or supplier's quality system acceptance is not affected. The supplier is given 30 calendar days to provide a corrective action. Upon receipt, the TERL will review the corrective action response and supporting documentation and notify the supplier on the adequacy of the corrective action.

**(3) 3<sup>rd</sup> Action – Notice of Suspension**

Unless an extension is requested and approved, failure to meet the 30-day Notice of Corrective Action deadline or provide a satisfactory corrective action will lead to suspension. In this case, the TERL will issue an official Notice of Suspension to the supplier. Under suspension, some or all products sold by the supplier are removed from the APL. In addition, the supplier's accepted quality system may be removed from the AQSL. Thus, these products are ineligible for sale or installation on transportation projects within the state for the period of suspension. The supplier is given 30 calendar days to provide a corrective action. Upon receipt, the TERL will review the corrective action response and supporting documentation and notify the supplier on the adequacy of the corrective action. If the corrective action is deemed satisfactory, the TERL will remove the suspension and notify the supplier.

**(4) 4<sup>th</sup> Action – Notice of Revocation**

Unless an extension is requested and approved, failure to meet the 30-day Notice of Suspension deadline or provide a satisfactory corrective action will lead to revocation. In this case, the TERL will issue an official Notice of Revocation to the supplier. Under revocation, some (i.e. reduction or withdrawal of certification) or all products (i.e. withdrawal of all certifications) sold by the supplier are removed from the APL. In addition, the supplier's accepted quality system may be removed from the AQSL. The supplier may not be allowed to resubmit delisted products for up to one year from the date of notification of ineligibility and the supplier shall follow the three-step certification/approval process described in

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**Section 3.2** to regain APL listing (beginning with Step 1).  
Special cases include the following:

- (a) Certification will be terminated at the request of the supplier without formal documentation provided by the TERL if the supplier does not wish to continue the certification (involving product or quality system) or the product is no longer manufactured or sold by the supplier;
- (b) Certification will be reduced or withdrawn if a product is deemed to not meet revised standards (refer to **Section 3.5**), without formal documentation provided by the TERL (including above listed penalties) provided;
- (c) Certification will be suspended if a product is deemed to pose an immediate threat to the general public. In this case, a Notice of Suspension (as described above) will be sent to the supplier;
- (d) Certification will be withdrawn if the supplier goes out of business, without formal documentation provided by the TERL;
- (e) The supplier's accepted quality system will be removed from the AQSL without formal documentation provided by the TERL (including above listed penalties) if the supplier refuses to proceed to a required quality system re-evaluation and has no product listed on the APL.

### 3.7 ADDRESSING SUSPECTED VIOLATIONS OF REQUIREMENTS

Suspected violations of Section 316.0745, F.S., product/quality system standards or certification/approval requirements should be reported to the TERL. To do so, the complainant may complete and submit a Non-Conformance Report (NCR) (downloadable from the same link listed in **Section 3.2**) to the TERL. Supporting evidence must be provided in order for the TERL to process the NCR. If there is sufficient evidence that a violation has occurred and a corrective action is deemed necessary, a corrective action request will be sent to the supplier consistent with the process outlined in **Section 3.6**. If the violation is believed to present an immediate threat to the general public, the subject product will be immediately removed from the APL. Upon resolution of the violation, the TERL will notify the originator of the non-conformance report. If a corrective action is not deemed necessary, the TERL will document the resolution and notify the originator accordingly.