

# **Chapter 1                    Caltrans Construction Organization**

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# **Chapter 1                      Caltrans Construction Organization**

## **Section 2 Public Relations**

### **1-201      General**

As representatives of Caltrans, construction personnel should at all times conduct themselves professionally. The subject of public relations is divided into the following categories:

- Internal relations among Caltrans personnel.
- Relations with the contractor.
- Relations with utility companies and other public agencies.
- Relations with the public.
- Relations with the media and traveling public.

### **1-202      Relations Among Caltrans Personnel**

Within Caltrans, public relations are divided into two subcategories: relations between the resident engineer and staff, and relations between the resident engineer and the district.

#### **1-202A    The Resident Engineer and Staff**

Development and maintenance of good relations between Caltrans personnel is largely a matter of adequate communication and a clear division of responsibility.

Communication is important between project personnel and the resident engineer. It is recommended that resident engineers hold short staff meetings each workweek. At these meetings the resident engineer should brief assistant resident engineers on the planned operations, announce any changes or new assignments of responsibility, and discuss any other subjects deemed pertinent.

Resident engineers should provide personnel with an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities and capacity for responsibility, and provide opportunities for assistant resident engineers to gain experience in the various construction phases.

Assignment rotation is encouraged as long as the effectiveness of the overall operation does not suffer. Similarly, if feasible, assigning personnel to operations different from those handled on previous projects is an option. Newly assigned personnel should study the applicable portions of the *Standard Specifications*, special provisions, plans, this manual, and any other Caltrans publications deemed applicable. An individual should not be assigned new work responsibilities until the resident engineer is satisfied that the person is capable of performing them correctly and effectively.

## 1-202B The Resident Engineer and the District

Communication is a two-way responsibility. Resident engineers should adequately inform their supervisors of facts so the supervisors are not embarrassed by learning about project events from outside sources. Conversely, supervisors should keep their personnel informed of decisions affecting an employee's area of responsibility. A resident engineer should first learn about district decisions that affect the project from the supervisor, not outside sources.

Construction personnel also sometimes communicate and work with the other Caltrans functional units. People in other units do their work with information available to them, just as construction forces do. When there is a difference of opinion on some part of the project, whether it is about design, traffic handling, or some other aspect, the resident engineer should approach the other party with an open mind to discuss the issue.

### **1-203 Relations With the Contractor**

In communicating with the contractor and the contractor's personnel, it is important that the resident engineer take a clear position. It is better to start on a basis of administering the contract firmly in accordance with the plans and specifications than it is to address a situation later in the contract's life caused by laxity.

The employees assigned to construction should have a thorough knowledge of the plans and specifications governing the contract. This should promote good relations with the contractor's personnel. If the resident engineer and assistant resident engineers demonstrate thorough knowledge of the plans and specifications, it is more likely the contractor's personnel will respect the resident engineer's judgment in cases where contract interpretation becomes an issue. A satisfactory relationship between Caltrans and the contractor generally results from good communication between the resident engineer and the contractor's superintendent.

Contract administration involves several attributes. Ideally, resident engineers and assistant resident engineers should be experienced, resourceful, and considerate, in addition to having a thorough knowledge of the specifications and the work to be done.

There are two types of specifications: method and quality assurance. Method specifications list explicit materials, equipment, and construction requirements; whereas, quality assurance specifications contain statements of required results that focus on the desired quality level of the finished product.

Method specifications are more restrictive as to the contractor's options. Deviations from specified methods require change orders. Deviations must also provide equal or better results while preserving the contract's integrity.

### **1-204 Relations With Utility Companies and Other Public Agencies**

Good public relations with internal and external stakeholders will have a beneficial effect in completing a construction project within scope, schedule, and budget. Preconstruction discussions that may affect Caltrans functional units or local agencies and communities should involve all stakeholders.

The resident engineer should make early personal contact and establish a good working relationship with staff of affected utility companies and other agencies. Such agencies may include: local school districts, local transit agencies, permitting agencies, California Highway Patrol and local police organizations, local bicyclist and pedestrian advocacy groups, local community groups, and any other government agency or local group with interest in the project. Early personal contact with staff from these agencies and groups will acquaint them with upcoming construction operations and will enable them to have input and schedule their work or services to the best advantage of all concerned.

### **1-205 Relations With the Public**

Another important part of public relations is courteously dealing with the people living or working near the project. They are the ones most affected by construction operations.

By courteously listening to and addressing questions and concerns, the resident engineer can generate good faith with the general public or individuals.

Construction operations, including temporary closures of streets and driveways, and construction noise (especially at night) may have an adverse effect on residents and businesses adjacent to the project. Informing people living and working near the project about the reason for, and the duration of, the activity will go a long way toward a higher degree of acceptance and tolerance. Timely notice is important. Also consider rescheduling construction activity around major business or public events.

The necessity for residential relocations should be considered during constructability reviews and, if necessary, discussed at project development team meetings. Details for temporary relocations appear in Section 10.10.05.01 of the *Right of Way Manual*.

If nighttime noise levels become an issue during construction, and temporary relocation of residents is not addressed in the project files, contact the construction field coordinator for guidance.

Start public relations early. The fullest possible cooperation of the contractor's organization should be solicited to achieve good public relations most effectively. The resident engineer and the superintendent can assure people living and working in the area that inconvenience and the nuisance of noise and dust will be kept to a minimum. For some projects on metropolitan freeways, contractors have distributed their own informational folders to area residents and businesses. This practice should be encouraged.

## **1-206 Relations With the Media and Traveling Public**

When highway construction information must be conveyed to large numbers of highway users, including those who commute regularly over a particular route and those who use the route only occasionally, contact the public information officer early in the project. The public information officer will use print and social media, radio, internet, and television to publicize the upcoming work.

Another helpful method of promoting good public relations is to use district personnel as speakers at meetings of the local chambers of commerce and service clubs. Resident engineers so inclined might consider joining a service organization. Frequent notices and progress reports in the local media are also common and effective methods of keeping the public informed of changing project conditions.

On advice by the resident engineer, the district should also issue news releases. The district should contact members of the local news media before the job starts, inform them how they can contact the proper person for information throughout the contract, and invite them to tour the project with the resident engineer. In special cases, the district may prepare and distribute pamphlets to motorists who are delayed as they pass through construction. If the traveling public outside of the district will be affected, the Caltrans information officer in Sacramento must be advised directly.

If someone from the media asks for information, refer them to the district public information office. Unless specifically instructed to speak to the media, politely refer all questions to the appropriate public information officer. Sometimes the public information officers will be the only ones who may respond for Caltrans about an issue. The public information office may arrange for site visits for the media and will inform the construction engineer of the scheduled visit. Inform the contractor of these scheduled visits. In the case of a traffic event, an emergency, or other incidents that prompt unscheduled media visits, inform the public information officer immediately.

Project personnel should always keep in mind that they are representatives of Caltrans and the State of California. As such, they are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will command respect, be a credit to the organization, and pass along vital information to the public.