

# Building Official Certification Examination Guide

The Licensing Unit of the Department of Labor and Industry provides this guide to individuals applying for Building Official certification. The guide contains information about the certification examination and examination process. The guide **does not** contain all the information an applicant needs to apply for certification and pass the examination.

The examination format, difficulty, and length has not changed since July 2006.

**This examination guide is based on the following resources:**

**Minnesota Statutes 326B**

**Minnesota Building Code, 2015 edition, (includes all state amendments)**

**Minnesota Residential Code, 2015 edition, (includes all state amendments, MN Rule Chapter 1322 Residential Energy Code, and MN Rule Chapter 1303 Minnesota Specific Provisions).**

**Minnesota Accessibility Code, 2015 edition**

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# Examination

## Purpose

The department requires individuals to pass an examination to be certified as a Building Official. Passing the examination shows an applicant’s ability to apply skills and knowledge gained through education, training, and/or experience. Certification demonstrates to the public that an individual is qualified to perform the duties of a Building Official.

This guide has the following information about the Building Official certification examination:

- Subject matter
- Question format
- Examination format and length
- Examination length
- Time allowed for completing the examination
- Examination process and rules

### **General Examination Information**

Applicants cannot ask questions to department staff monitoring the examination. The examination instructions, questions, and answers do not require any further explanation.

Examination questions test knowledge needed to become a Building Official.

The department provides current statutes and codes as reference materials along with a standard desktop calculator for applicants to use during the examination. The calculator includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square root, and percentage functions. The reference materials are available for the entire exam. However, applicants should not rely on the reference materials to answer all the questions.

**No other materials or electronic devices, including cell phones, are allowed in the building.**

Applicants will automatically fail the examination and be required to submit a new application, including required fees, for the following actions:

- Giving assistance to or receiving it from anyone, including those who are also taking the examination;
- Copying questions or making notes regarding questions; or
- Leaving the building before completing the examination.

Applicants may leave the examination room to use the restroom within the building.

The department may electronically monitor the examination room.

Applicants may only view examination materials during the examination because they are classified as nonpublic data per Minnesota Statutes §13.34. This ensures the fairness and integrity of the examination process.

### **Question Format**

Examination questions require applicants show they have the skills and knowledge needed to be a Building Official. The department designed the examination to test an applicant's ability to apply knowledge and the building code to situations encountered by Building Officials. In order to assess applicants, the examinations has:

- Multiple choice questions with answer selections that could be correct. An applicant's knowledge will allow them to determine which of the reasonable answers is correct.
- Questions with unnecessary information that test an applicant's ability to determine what information is important to answer the question correctly.
- The information contained in the question will direct applicants to apply their knowledge of the subject area or code to arrive at the correct answer.

All examination questions are multiple choice. The question or statement will be followed by five answer options that you may select from. The examination has different multiple choice question formats:

- Questions that require applicants to select more than one answer. The question will state how many answers must be selected.
- Questions phrased negatively so applicants must select the answer options that do not apply. Applicants must select the answer option that is **not** correct. All other answer options are correct.

Additional information:

- As many as five different versions of the same examination may be given on an examination day.
- The department may modify the examinations up to three times during a code adoption cycle.
- The department accepts suggestions about the examination and questions and may use them to develop future examination.

### Examination Difficulty

The certification category an applicant applies for determines the difficulty of the examination and its questions. The Building Official exam contains a higher level of questions that require a more in depth overview of the MN Building Code and allows those certified to enforce and administer a greater level of authority. The Building Official Limited exam contains fewer questions from the MN Building Code and allows those certified to administer the building code to a level allowed by MN Rules 1800.5200.

### Length of Examination

Below is the number of questions on each examination and the length of time an applicant has to complete it.

Certification Examination	Number of Examination Questions	Length of time
Certified Building Official	150	5.5 hours
Building Official, Limited	120	4.5 hours
Accessibility Specialist	40	2 hours

### Scoring

- All examination questions have the same point value.
- Partial points are not granted. Applicants will receive full credit for answering the question correctly. If a question is answered incorrectly, then no points are awarded.
- Applicants will pass the examination if they answer 70 percent of the questions correctly.

### Examination Results

- The department will mail examination results within two weeks of the date the applicant took the examination.
- The department cannot inform applicants of examination results by phone or email.
- **If an applicant passes** the examination, then the examination results letter will include instructions about obtaining certification.
- **If an applicant fails** the examination, then the examination results letter will contain instructions about how to apply to retake the examination. An applicant must wait 30 days after receiving the results letter before re-applying.

## Examination Review

- The department rechecks examinations that are within five percentage points of passing.
- The department **will not** provide a written or oral review of applicant's examination. However, applicants may submit a written comment to the licensing unit about specific examination questions.
- If applicants fail the examination, then they must wait 30 days after receiving the results letter before applying to retake the examination.

## Sample Questions

The sample questions are examples of question format but not examination content or knowledge areas. The sample questions ask about knowledge areas that may not be included on the examination an applicant takes.

1. Which **three** of the following requirements specifically apply to conventionally framed floor cantilevers?
  - A. Floor cantilever spans shall not exceed the nominal depth of the wood floor joist.
  - B. Floor cantilevers are not permitted when an exterior deck is attached to the floor framing.
  - C. Floor cantilevers supporting an exterior balcony are permitted to be constructed in accordance with Table R502.3.3(2).
  - D. Floor cantilevers are permitted to exceed the nominal depth of the joist if the joists are doubled.
  - E. Floor cantilevers constructed in accordance with Table R502.3.3 (1) shall be permitted when supporting a light-framed bearing wall and roof only.

**Answers: A, C, E    Reference: IRC R502.3.3**

This question asks the applicant to select more than one correct answer. The question clearly states applicants are to select three of the answer options.

2. Which of the five statements listed below **does not** correctly state code requirements pertaining to tenant separations in a Covered Mall Building?
  - A. Tenant spaces are not required to be separated from the mall.
  - B. Each tenant space shall be separated from other tenant spaces by a fire partition complying with Section 708.
  - C. A tenant separation wall is not required in attic or ceiling spaces above tenant separation walls.
  - D. Tenant spaces shall be separated from each other by a 2 hour fire wall.
  - E. Tenant separation walls shall have a fire-resistance of not less than 1 hour.

**Answer D    Reference IBC 402 and IBC 708**

This question is phrased negatively. All answers are correct except for one. Applicants are asked to select the one answer that does not meet the condition in the question.

3. The maximum allowable floor area per floor, without allowable area increases, for a two story, Type V-B, Group B occupancy that has 3 different tenants including a bank, an outpatient clinic, and post office in the basement is limited to \_\_\_\_\_ square feet.

- A. 9,000
- B. 27,000
- C. 18,000
- D. 3,000
- E. 13,500

**Answer: A Reference IBC Table 503**

This question has unnecessary information about the building tenants. It tests an applicant's ability to ignore that information and focus on items that are important.

4. Only one exit stairway is required from the second floor of a single family dwelling unit. A second stairway is shown on the plan that connects the second floor with the first floor and basement. The second stairway must meet the following?
- A. The stairway must be in a vertical exit enclosure in accordance with IBC 1020.1.
  - B. The stairway is not required to comply with rise and run requirements.
  - C. The stairway is not required to comply with headroom requirements of R311.7.2.
  - D. There may be reduced sized landings at each floor level.
  - E. Stairways must meet all of the requirements of section R311.7.

**Answer: E Reference IRC R311.1**

This question is a typical multiple choice question. It asks an applicant to select one of the answer options provided.

## Formulas and Calculations

The examinations require applicants to use mathematical formulas and calculations. The examples provided are basic and do not include all the formulas and calculations applicants must be familiar with to pass the examination.

The knowledge applicants have gained through practical experience is useful, but other resources are necessary to find examples of more complicated calculations and formulas. Studying other resources will help applicants to be as prepared as possible for the examination.

### Units of Measurement

All questions and answers on the examination will use the inch-pound unit system.

### Percentages

A percentage is the ratio of a whole number to 100. To express the percentage (%) as a decimal value, you divide the percentage by 100.

Sample Percentage Questions:

**What is 70% of 140?**

The percentage amount is divided by 100 to obtain the decimal value:

$$70 \div 100 = .70$$

Then 140 is multiplied by .70:

$$140 \times .70 = 98$$

**Answer: 98**

**What is the result of increasing 120 by 25%?**

The percentage amount is divided by 100:

$$25 \div 100 = .25$$

120 is multiplied by .25:

$$120 \times .25 = 30$$

30 is then added to the original value of 120

$$30 + 120 = 150$$

**Answer: 150**

## Equations

An algebraic formula is a type of equation that shows the relationship among different variables. If the formula is known, then the opposite function can be performed on both sides of the equation to isolate the unknown variable.

For example, a known formula is  $a + b = c$ . If  $a = 7$  and  $c = 10$ , then the equation is:

$7 + b = 10$ . To determine what the unknown  $b$  variable is you subtract 7 from each side of the equalize sign:

$$7 + b - 7 = 10 - 7$$

$$b = 3$$

If the formula is known then the opposite function can be performed on both sides of the equation to produce a variation of the equation. Using the formula  $a + b = c$ , it may be changed by subtracting  $a$  or  $b$  from both sides resulting in the equations:

$$a = c - b \text{ or } b = c - a.$$

## Examination Knowledge Areas

The table below shows what knowledge areas applicants must be familiar with for the each certification type.

Knowledge Areas	Certification type		
	BO	BO-L	AS
<b>Code Administration</b>			
Authority to adopt and administer code	X	X	X
Permits, exempt work	X	X	X
Appeals	X	X	X
Codes and standards	X	X	X

Site plans, building plans, moved buildings	X	X	X
Required inspections	X	X	X
Alternate construction methods	X	X	X
Fees	X		
Recycling space	X		
<b>Minnesota Building Code, Minnesota Residential Code</b>			
Building allowable area and height	X		
Occupancy classification	X	X	
Type of construction	X		
Fire walls, fire separation, occupancy separation	X	X	
Exits, stairways, handrails, guards	X	X	
Footings, foundations, slabs	X	X	
Soil bearing	X	X	
Snow loads, wind loads	X	X	
Frost depth	X	X	
Wood framing details	X	X	
Habitable rooms	X	X	
Interior finishes	X	X	
Safety glazing	X	X	
Mezzanines	X		
Sprinkler requirements, hazard levels, standpipes	X		
Smoke alarms, power source	X	X	
Thermal barriers	X		
Masonry fireplaces, chimneys	X	X	
Exterior plaster, veneer	X	X	
Sound transmission control	X	X	
Heating facilities	X	X	
Roofing	X	X	
Ventilation	X		
Vapor barriers	X		
Prefabricated buildings	X	X	
Industrialized modular buildings	X	X	

Knowledge Areas	Certification type		
	BO	BO-L	AS
Manufactured homes	X	X	
<b>Minnesota Accessibility Code</b>			

Accessible routes	X	X	X
Parking spaces	X	X	X
Building entrances	X	X	X
Floor surfaces	X	X	X
Accessible floor levels	X	X	X
Ramps, walks, slopes	X	X	X
Restrooms, toilet compartments, showers	X	X	X
Plumbing fixtures	X	X	X
<b>Minnesota Rule 1322 Residential Energy</b>			
Procedure Criteria	X	X	
Residential Energy Administration	X	X	
Material, Systems and Equipment	X	X	
Thermal Envelope	X	X	
<b>Minnesota Rule 1303 Radon Control</b>			
Definitions	X	X	
Requirements for passive control	X	X	
Requirements for active radon control	X	X	

Applicants are expected to be familiar with the knowledge areas for the certification type. However, the examination may not test familiarity with all knowledge areas.

## Summary of Your Disability Rights

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) require the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) to provide reasonable accommodations and modifications for qualified individuals with disabilities who are applying for a license, taking a test, and accessing a facility. The accommodation must be requested, be necessary and not create an undue burden.

- A qualified individual must meet the essential eligibility requirements for the license sought.
- A person with a disability has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.
- A person with disability is substantially limited when his or her impairment causes significant difficulty, effort, and time to perform a major life activity in comparison to most people in the general population. A major life activity includes: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, sitting, reaching, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, interacting with others and working.

If you have questions, call:

- ADA – 1-800-514-3001 (voice) or 1-800-514-0383 (TTY)

- MHRA – 1-800-657-3704 (voice) or 1-800-627-3529 (Minnesota Relay)

If you are a qualified individual with a disability and need reasonable accommodation to apply for a license, take a test or access a facility:

- fill in, sign and date the Reasonable Accommodation Request form;
- sign and date the Data Practices Act form; and
- mail or drop off both forms to DLI with your Application for Examination form.

## Reasonable Accommodation Request Form

**All requests must first be approved by DLI’s Construction Codes and Licensing Division. Candidates must wait for confirmation of approval before applying for license, scheduling an examination or accessing a facility.**

Last name	First name	M.I.	Date
Street address		City	State ZIP code
Daytime phone number		Email address	
Describe the accommodation you want (equipment, reader, extra testing time, etc.)			
Describe any accommodation DLI has provided you in the past			

An individual who has a physical or mental disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, or the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) may request an accommodation to apply for a license, take an examination or access a facility.

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) will provide an accommodation unless it creates an undue burden. DLI will contact the applicant after receiving the required documents and making a determination. DLI will schedule the examination and confirm it with the applicant.

If you wish to request an accommodation, send the following to DLI’s CCLD Licensing.

1. This accommodation request form – filled in, signed and dated.
2. A written statement from your health care provider (on letterhead, signed and dated by your health care provider) documenting: the nature of your disability; what major life activity your disability substantially limits; and the type of reasonable accommodation needed to apply for a license, take a license test or access a building.
3. The attached Licensing ADA data practices notice – signed and dated.

**Note:** If you are requesting an accommodation to take a license test, also include your Application for Examination form along with the above documents.

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**Office use only**  
 Application number \_\_\_\_\_ Approved date \_\_\_\_\_ Denied date \_\_\_\_\_

This material can be made available in different forms, such as audio, Braille or large print by calling (651) 284-5005 or 1-800-342-5354.

## **CCLD Licensing ADA/MHRA Data Practices Notice**

Pursuant to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes § 13.04, subd. 2, the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) is asking you to supply private or confidential data concerning your request for reasonable accommodation or modification as governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and/or the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA).

**Sign and date below after you have fully read, understand and agree to the following.**

- I authorize the DLI Construction Codes and Licensing Division’s (CCLD’s), Licensing Section and any other authorized division within DLI to receive and review my medical information to determine whether I have a disability and my need for reasonable accommodation.
- I understand the medical information being requested shall be provided to DLI’s CCLD Licensing Section within 15 days of written request. If the requested information is not provided within 15 days of request, reasonable accommodation may be delayed or denied.
- I authorize any authorized personnel from DLI to contact my health care provider to clarify and authenticate medical information should it be deemed incomplete or insufficient and I fail to resolve any deficiency within seven days of written request from DLI.
- I understand I may refuse to provide DLI with the requested medical information. However, I understand refusal may result in reasonable accommodation being delayed or denied.
- I understand the medical information I provide may be accessed by authorized DLI personnel to determine eligibility under the ADA/MHRA and released to other persons or entities authorized by state or federal law.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person requesting accommodation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Scheduling Examinations

**Do not schedule an examination until you receive notification that the department approved your application.** The department must verify that an applicant qualifies for a license before the examination is scheduled. The department will notify qualified applicants by mail when the verification is complete. Applicants will be directed to the department's website to schedule an examination.

The department will not schedule dates for individuals who have not received written approval of their application.

Applicants must schedule their examinations. Walk-ins are not permitted to take an examination. Applicants may reschedule their examination one time. The department will deny applications of individuals that fail to appear for a rescheduled examination.

Applicants that have failed the examination must apply to retest, submit the fee, and qualify for another examination date.

For more information about exam dates, location and scheduling, visit:

[http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/exam\\_schedule.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/exam_schedule.asp)

## Examination Day

- Applicants must arrive at least 30 minutes before their examination is scheduled to begin.
- The department requires applicants to present photo ID before they are allowed to take the examination.
- Applicants are allowed to bring food and beverages into the examination room.

### Location

The [Department of Labor and Industry Building](#) is located at 443 Lafayette Road North, Saint Paul, north of the intersection of Interstate 94 and US Highway 52 (Lafayette Road North), northeast of downtown Saint Paul.

The "Approved for Examination" letter contains specific instructions for those scheduled to take the examination in St. Paul or at a site in greater Minnesota.

# Qualifications for Certification Applicants

[Minnesota Rules 1301.0300](#) describes the qualifications the department requires for Building Official certification applicants to have. An applicant qualifies for building official certification with education, national certifications, municipal code administration experience, and/or construction related experience.

## Military Experience

The department allows applicants to use military experience as a qualification for building official certification. They must submit a copy of their DD Form 214, Certification of Release or Discharge from Active Duty with application. Military experience may be used as a qualification, if the applicant had specific skilled participation in:

- Construction of foundations
- Construction of superstructures
- Installation of mechanical, plumbing, electrical, or fire suppression systems.

## Reciprocal Agreements

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry does not have reciprocal agreements with other states for Building Official certifications. If an individual has received Building Official certification from another state, they must still apply for certification in Minnesota and take the examination.

## Continuing Education Requirements

The department requires certified building officials to complete continuing education every two years in order to maintain their certification. [Minnesota Statutes § 326B.133](#) describes the continuing education requirements for each Building Official category.

Continuing education completed during a two year cycle is only valid for that two year cycle. If a certified building official completes additional continuing education beyond department requirements, it cannot be applied towards the next certification renewal.

The department approves continuing education. [Minnesota Rules 1301.1000](#) lists approved continuing education courses. The department approves other courses that meet the requirements of [Minnesota Statutes § 326B.0981, subd. 5](#) and have content that is useful to Building Officials.

## Certification and Examination Application

For a Building Official certification application, visit: <http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Official.asp>

**Upon request, this document can be made available in alternative formats (Braille, large print, or audio).**