Updates and Additions to Drawings Standard Benefit Owners and Facility Managers

by Ed Lowe

The American Institute of Architects, the Construction Specifications Institute and the National Institute of Building Sciences published a new version of the United States National CAD Standard® (NCS) – Version 4.0 – in January. It is the first update to the voluntary, graphical style guidelines for presenting construction drawings since 2005. The updates and additions make the standard more efficient, offering benefits to all users of construction drawings, including commercial building owners and facility managers.

The NCS is used in more than 5,000 workplaces – by both public and private sector organizations – because it provides a consistent framework for classifying electronic design data. This is especially important for owners and facility managers who often work with multiple A/E firms across the entire lifecycle of a building. Using the NCS, and requiring consultants to do so as well, makes it easier to retrieve information from the drawing sets that an owner or facility manager receives from various sources. The NCS improves communication among a project's team members which helps reduce errors and change orders, especially important for those concerned about cost overruns.

Changes Improve and Update the NCS

The NCS helps make the design, construction and operations processes more efficient as more sectors in the industry adopt the same standard. It is important for building owners and facility managers to adopt the latest edition, because it is updated to match industry developments and changes. NCS Version 4.0 allows the owner's team – architects, engineers, contractors and subcontractors – to more efficiently communicate visual information.

NCS Version 4.0 features many important refinements. The Uniform Drawing System now features a symbols library that has been updated, expanded and clarified. Updates to the CAD Layer Guidelines make it easier to find discipline layer names, and new layer names have been added to clarify areas such as telecommunications.

The updated NCS also is available in PDF format and some sections are available in Excel or .dwg file formats. These changes streamline the management of electronic data by making it easier to exchange data between design and facility management programs.

The NCS and its Relationship to BIM

Now is an important time to switch to the updated version. Doing so helps owners and facility managers stay in step with the industry, so that everyone is on the same page. This is particularly important as the industry turns its attention to reducing barriers to exchanging building data to support Building Information Modeling (BIM).

For those who don't use the NCS, now is a great time to get on board. NCS Version 4.0 makes it easier to transfer data – it is compatible with most CAD and BIM software – and the National Building Information Model Standard (NBIMS) requires that drawing output comply with the NCS.

If you would like to learn more about the latest version of the NCS, please visit www.nationalcadstandard.org. The official Web site features information on implementing the NCS; a question-and-answer section; and an online discussion board for NCS users.

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