

PITFALLS OF USING A BOILERPLATE SPECIFICATION

Boilerplate: (noun):

- 1. Standardized text.*
- 2. Formulaic language.*

There is a reason engineering firms would like to use boilerplate specifications; if you are going to spend the time, energy and money to create a specification, then why not do it once and do it right? While there are some sections of the specification that may not change on a project by project basis, vibration isolation, seismic and wind restraint is NOT one of them!

Seismic and wind restraint are code driven minimum requirements which are project specific; seismic in particular is very site specific. You can have the exact same structure with the same use group and located in the same town. One may require no seismic restraints at all, while the other requires full seismic on all components simply because of a difference in the soil configurations at the specific site. Wind loads on components can almost double between a building with a roof height of 50' and the same use building with a roof height of 60'. Even vibration isolation should be carefully reviewed, especially in potentially sound sensitive projects or sound sensitive areas in a project. The type of isolation that can be used effectively on a roof mounted condenser on a concrete and steel building may be entirely different from what would be required for a roof mounted condenser on a light wood frame structure.

In the end, if you use a boilerplate specification, you run two risks. First, you may make your specification so general that contractors are forced to over-bid to cover all aspects of the specification requirements when the actual project may require little or nothing. On the other end of the spectrum, you can easily leave a requirement out when it IS actually needed.

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VISCMA is a non-profit association representing the manufacturers of seismic restraint, vibration isolation and noise control equipment. The primary objectives of the organization are to educate the construction industry on the proper use and application of vibration isolation and seismic restraint and to develop standards to continually improve the industry.

In partnership with FEMA and ASCE, VISCMA also publishes three Seismic Installation and Inspection Manuals designed to assist field personnel.

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