

Detailed Building and Site Condition Assessment Instructions

Introduction

This form was developed for use by FEMA by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, an office of the National Park Service, in collaboration with the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. The form is intended to provide public officials with a tool to record a detailed assessment of the condition of buildings and sites within a disaster area. It was updated as of July 2011.

Several assumptions informed the design of this form:

- the built environment is the focus of the assessment effort;
- this assessment follows a earlier rapid assessment that found possible historic value for the structure or property
- teams will include a local building inspector;
- assessments are conducted during a thorough inspection of the property, and access for interior inspection is provided;

The *Detailed Building and Site Condition Assessment Instructions* was updated using Filemaker Pro database software version 11.0. The form is available as a database file or as an Adobe PDF file on-line at www.ncptt.nps.gov

Step 1 – Preparation:

Before using this condition assessment form, inspectors should gather existing data. A large amount of information exists that can be used to identify historic properties and cultural resources before inspectors ever enter the field:

- State Historic Preservation Office maps:
 - National Historic Landmarks, National Register Individual Listings, National Register Districts, Eligible Properties, including:
 - historic buildings
 - archaeological sites
- Landmark/Historic Commission maps:
 - Locally regulated historic Properties and Districts

Inspectors should be briefed on each section of the Assessment Form and associated definitions (see attached Definitions Page). Safety issues must be addressed, including appropriate gear and supplies needed to ensure personal safety.

Recommended or preferred equipment needed for the condition assessment includes (1) a GPS instrument, such as a Trimble Model GeoXT, GeoXM or GeoXH, (2) clip board, (3) 100 ft. tape measure, (4) pencil or permanent ink pen, and a (5) digital camera.

Step 2 – How to use this form:

The condition assessment form is designed to be completed by inspectors with limited training in historic preservation. Ideally, an assessment team should draw on historical architects, conservators, archaeologists, engineers, and others. If a limited number of trained personnel are available, especially historical architects, their assessment efforts should be targeted at the

known historic resources. Inspectors should make every attempt to fill out the form in its entirety to the best of their ability. When in doubt, a second more detailed evaluation should be recommended.

The form is divided into twelve major sections:

- **Inspection** – information on inspector, affiliation, area inspected and final posting;
- **Property Description** – information on location of the site, type of construction, primary occupancy, and ownership;
- **Property Location Data** – documentation of the four corners of the property using Global Positioning System (GPS)
- **Potential Hazards** – safety of entering site or structure and potential hazards;
- **Significance** – historical significance, designation, and identifiable styles or features;
- **Site Evaluation** – physical aspects of site, sustained damage, and archeological material;
- **Exterior Evaluation** – state of any potential hazards on the site or structure;
- **Interior Evaluation** – state of interior materials and conditions;
- **Contents Evaluation** – presence of collections and conditions;
- **Recommendations, Comments** – space for additional information;
- **Final Posting** – documentation on inspection and allowed use;
- **Sketch (optional)** – record pertinent physical information.

Step 3 – Location Data:

Field teams should:

- Use Global Positioning System (GPS) units that have an accuracy of +/- 3 meters.
- Record data information in decimal degrees., using the NAD83 datum.
- Have GPS post processing capability of exporting GPS data into GIS shapefiles
- At a minimum map each site or standing structure as a point; however, whenever possible map the property as a boundary or building footprint.
- If mapping as a point be sure to note if the point represents the center of the site or building, a random point within the site boundary, the corner of a building, or the entrance of the building.

Map each contributing site, building, or structure that contributes to an historic district or historic landscape. If a GPS instrument is not available, then the assessment will serve as the primary survey document. Plot the location of the resource on a 1:24,000 scale USGS quadrangle map to be submitted with the form.

Step 4 – Archive Data:

Data may be collected manually using printed versions of the form. Alternately, electronic data can be captured installing Filemaker Pro ver. 7 or higher software on a PC-based device such as a tablet, laptop or palmtop using the programmed version of the form. If forms are completed manually, data should be inputted into a database file regularly for further analysis at a later date.

Step 5 —Action Recommendations:

Inspectors will make strategic recommendations in the further actions section of the form. Issues of public health and safety are the first priority. Saving structures are a high, but second priority. Further recommendations may include stabilization. Simple tarps, shoring, and boarding up of the site might make the difference in saving a structure. Recovery and conservation of

collections are a third priority. When possible to observe interior conditions, note any visible signs of collections.

Each site or structure should be posted upon completion of inspection. This posting serves as notice to the public regarding the safety of the structure or site. In addition, postings that reflect “historic designation” or “detailed evaluation needed” will assist in further inspection of the property by specialist teams including professionals with expertise in health and safety, structural engineering, archeology, historic preservation or collections care.

For More Information:

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