



Q&A: Standards

Besides a blanket statement such as “all work must follow ANSI A300 standards,” how much do you use the A300 standards in specification writing? Have you found them easy or difficult to incorporate?

A300 standards are generally not comprehensive enough for specs I have done. Additionally, the State of Colorado has standards that are LAW They take precedence over any specs and are adapted to regional conditions.

—Donald H. Godi, FASLA, RCA #444

I write specifications based on A300 Standards. Since I don't generally know who will be doing any work I recommend or prescribe, this will hopefully allow any contractors looking at the work to bid it and complete it properly. Many professionals reference the standard when they should be writing specifications based on the standard. I still see blatantly inappropriate items such as “prune to ANSI A300 pruning standards.” This is meaningless. On the other hand, I do believe that the A300 has gotten a bit cumbersome with so many subsections, each with its own set of definitions. I expect the evolution of these standards will at some point lead to consolidation and more consistency between the subsections. Having been a member of the A300 committee, I realize what a challenge this can be. The people (current and past) on this com-

mittee deserve much more credit than they have received.

—Donald E. Zimar, RCA #446

I incorporate references to ANSI Standards (and ISA Best Management Practices [BMPs]) in virtually all specifications I pen, as well as in many reports. It is important to note, that neither ANSI Standards nor ISA BMPs constitute or are intended as specifications, which is so stated within the publications. My brief description of the difference is “Standards are general and broadly applied guidelines and limitations; Specifications are detailed, specific methods and/or materials, applied to or that can be applied to, a specific project.” In even shorter words... “Standards describe how to do the work; Specifications describe what the work is.”

—Torrey Young, RCA #282

ANSI Standards are an excellent way to cover all the bases when making recommendations, but these are meant to be applied on a broader scope in a general context, and not all of an A300 standard will be applicable to each situation. Since every situation is different and each assignment may require varying degrees of specific recommendation details, the final product will need to be tailored to each assignment.

—Martin A. Shaw, RCA #470

What has been your experience with submitting public comment to the ASC A300? Did you submit directly to the Committee or through a voting member of an organization with which you are affiliated?

I have had multiple channels available for providing feedback to the A300 committee. Having been on the committee, I can confirm that every comment they receive, regardless of the way it filters through to the committee, is taken seriously and given adequate consideration. Indeed, at times we would revisit the same issue multiple times from multiple perspectives in order to reach a consensus. Occasionally, such discussions would digress into circular deliberations of a very tedious nature, when revisited for the umpteenth time. But all were addressed and resolved fairly, in my experience, even ones I disagreed with. It is an amazing process for those who have never witnessed it directly. I believe the committee would agree, though, that the preferred way of receiving comments is through the voting member of a particular affiliation, as frequently they can combine several comments on a similar topic to one discussion session in a more efficient use of the limited time they have when they meet.

—Donald E. Zimar, RCA #446

I continue to remain independent of the A300 Standard development process, although I have spoken with many arbor-

Q & A *continued*

ists on issues pertaining to the standards, and some of my views may have been passed on to Committee members.

—Martin A. Shaw, RCA #470

Have you ever represented an issue involving standards interpretation and implementation that was heard in a legal venue and related to a practice you have never performed? If an arborist that was not a consultant was serving as an expert for the other side, please provide any information on how the expert practitioner v. expert consultant issue played out.

Any arborist serving as an Expert Witness is certainly functioning as a consultant, so the differentiation intended must be a consultant with extensive field experience versus one with little-to-none. I, as many Consulting Arborists, have substantial field experience, but I have testified opposite other related Experts, qualified primarily due to field experience, that clearly were not well-versed in either litigation environments or the profession of consulting. I also have opposed Experts who practiced as full-time consultants, who lacked in field experience. Neither scenario serves well in substantiating their opinions. It is critical in serving as an Expert, to know and be comfortable with your limitations.

—Torrey Young, RCA #282

I cannot comment as I am involved in a couple of cases where this very situation exists. I am not sure how this will play out. It will be very interesting.

—Donald E. Zimar, RCA #446

The A300 Standards have been well written and the definitions of terms are spelled out in each standard. Great efforts have been made by the Committee members to make clear and unambiguous A300 standards. However, there is much room for interpretation regarding

the scant underlying science that supports the standards. Even so, efforts to bastardize the interpretation and thrust of the standards to meet varying specific agendas have been made. Successful administration of the A300 Standards requires a thorough understanding of arboricultural principles, the science behind the Standards, lots of field experiences and detailed understanding of the Standards themselves.

—Martin A. Shaw, RCA #470

As a Consulting Arborist, do you only take assignments for trials involving practice standards (A300), or do you also take assignments for trials involving safety standards (Z133)? If the latter, do you have any advice for your fellow consultants on taking such assignments?

Practice and safety standards are very different. No consultant should pass judgment or express an opinion on either unless they are uniquely qualified to do so. Number one rule.... don't pretend to be something you are not. I personally will not take an assignment concerning safety matters.

—Donald H. Godi, RCA #444

As a Consulting Arborist I take assignments for trials involving whatever standards become relevant to the case. I do not determine what cases I take based on which standards might be involved. I find the most challenging aspect as a consultant is to stay current with the newest version of the standards and the timing of their adoption, as many cases come to trial well after a newer version was published. I have even seen arborists on opposing sides of a case quote older versions, and in one case, quote a draft version of an unpublished standard. I think this is the challenge: to know the standards and stay current as well as remaining familiar with the history. Also, it is important when referencing the A300

to acknowledge that it is a standard, not a specification. The specification needs to be developed by applying the standard. Too many consultants and arborists refer to the standards when they should be writing specifications. My advice is this: Keep the most current versions (and old versions) of the standards readily accessible; read them and use them; apply them appropriately when writing specifications; and refer to them as necessary when they are relevant to a particular case.

—Donald E. Zimar, RCA #446

I take on assignments for both practice and safety. My advice is this: Know everything you can about the subject of your investigation. Be as thorough as practicable. Make every effort to corroborate your conclusions by using other independent sources of information. The more independent weight you can place on your conclusion the better. Do not rely on your own opinion independent of objective sources. The A300 and Z133 are good sources of objective and independent information that have withstood academic and industry review, but they are certainly not the only sources of information. For example, there are a host of OSHA regulations that pertain to tree worker safety. There are many Federal regulations that cover utility operations, and there are a plethora of local ordinances that may pertain to any given situation.

When it comes to standards, the law always takes precedence. If you plan on doing litigation work, make sure you have professional liability insurance.

—Martin A. Shaw, RCA #470

As with any assignment, do not take on roles you are not competent in. ANSI Z133 is not a universally applied standard. Statutory safety requirements can vary greatly in safety requirements, in specified project or contract requirements and between jurisdictions. Further, there are many safety

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Member News *continued*

mittee to serve as ASCA representative, along with ASCA's full representative, **Stephen Miller, RCA #404.**

Along with Troy Sibelius, FASLA, Don will lead a seminar discussion at the ASLA Annual Meeting in Phoenix this coming October. The topic title is: *Proj-*

ect Risk Management: New Obstacles to Consider, which will endeavor to equip attendees with info on newer project risks such as indemnification clauses, risk transfer to subconsultants, total project management, consequential damages, needed insurance coverage in today's market and defined scopes of work. 🌱

Q&A *continued*

standards other than ANSI Z133 that may apply, between industries and industry facets. Before accepting any such assignment, thoroughly research the relevant jurisdiction and industries, and become well versed in the applicable requirements.

—Torrey Young, RCA #282 🌱

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