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Product Evaluation Process, November 5, 2013

Maine Department of Transportation

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Maine Department of Transportation's
Product Evaluation Process

PURPOSE

The Product Evaluation Committee operates through the cooperative efforts of the Highway Program; Bridge Program; Multimodal Program; Highway Maintenance Division; Bridge Maintenance Division; Traffic Engineering Division; Environmental Office; Safety Office, Transportation Research Division; and the Maine FHWA Division Office. The Committee's purpose is to provide advice and guidance on the evaluation of new products and methods. The Committee may prequalify or disapprove the use of these products or methods in the design, construction and maintenance of Maine's infrastructure. Sales representatives submit their information to a single Committee rather than several functional divisions within the Department.

Acceptance of a product for evaluation by MaineDOT, or the Committee's prequalification of the product after evaluation, shall in no way represent an endorsement, commitment to purchase, or intent to specify the product investigated regardless of its performance during evaluation.

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Committee is composed of three subcommittees each responsible for specific categories of products. The categories and current committee member make-up are as follows:

Concrete and Bridge Related Items Sub Committee

- Transportation Research Division
- Multimodal Program
- Bridge Program
- Bridge Maintenance Division
- FHWA Division Office

Highway, Safety, and Traffic Related Items Sub Committee

- Transportation Research Division
- Maintenance & Operations, Western Region
- Highway Maintenance Division
- Traffic Engineering Division
- Highway Program
- FHWA Division Office

Environmental Related Items Sub Committee

- Transportation Research Division
- Maintenance & Operations, Southern Region
- Highway Program
- Environmental Office
- FHWA Division Office

Representatives from other units may serve on an as-needed basis as "friends of the Committee." The Committee Chairman and the Department's Product Evaluation Coordinator, is responsible for arranging meetings, receiving information from sales representatives, disseminating it to the other committee members, and the coordination of product studies as needed.

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The subcommittees typically meet quarterly (actual frequency ultimately depends upon the quantity of products submitted for evaluation) in order to ensure timely consideration of products that have been submitted for evaluation.

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

- (1) Sales representatives seeking prequalification of new products should first check to see if a product acceptance criterion has been established for their category of product. This information is available for download from the Department's Qualified Products List (QPL) website or by contacting the Product Evaluation Coordinator directly.
- (2) Representatives are instructed to submit their product information along with a completely filled-out and signed "Preliminary Information for Product Evaluation" form (available for download from the QPL website) be sure to include other pertinent data such as MSDS, Product Data Sheets, and Instructions for Use. The Committee members will examine product information and history of use by other agencies. Testing of material properties may be requested at this time. After reviewing this information, the Committee members will provide a recommendation concerning prequalification, rejection, request additional information, or recommend laboratory testing or a trial use of the product. Please do not submit any product samples at this time.
- (3) When requested by the Committee, the sales representative shall work directly with members of the Committee to provide additional information regarding their product submittal. A recommendation regarding the product will then be made to the full Committee. The Chairman or his designate will serve as study coordinator in the development and presentation of these reports to the Committee.
- (4) The Committee may prequalify, require additional information, recommend a trial or limited use, prequalify with conditions, or not qualify product submittals. Regardless of the determination, all product submittals received with a completely filled-out "New Product Evaluation Form" will be given due consideration and be evaluated by the Committee. The Company representative that initiated the submittal will be notified in writing of the findings of the Committee.
- (5) The Committee designate will coordinate the monitoring of trial installations and ensure that long term documentation on the durability and performance of the products and methods is obtained.
- (6) The Chairman may reject from evaluation, those products with no apparent or significant application for use by MaineDOT, or products that are deemed to be not far enough along in the development process to be effectively evaluated (not market ready).
- (7) This program is intended for the evaluation of new and/or proprietary products that are market-ready. Products that meet the requirements of MaineDOT's Standard Specifications are not typically evaluated.

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(8) Data resulting from an evaluation of the submitted product is public information and will not be considered privileged. All information developed during this product evaluation may be released by the Maine Department of Transportation at its discretion. For example: Information may be shared with other AASHTO member organizations through AASHTO's Product Evaluation List (APEL). APEL is a repository of findings from the evaluation and testing of new and/or proprietary transportation products that have been conducted by AASHTO member organizations.

RE-QUALIFICATION, REVISION, REMOVAL OF PRODUCTS

(1) The following items are required five years from the date of initial acceptance, and every five years thereafter for a product to remain on the Qualified Products List:

(a) Certificate of Compliance: A notarized certification of compliance letter on Company letterhead is required for every product presently on the QPL. Each certification letter must include a statement that the product presently furnished to MaineDOT is identical in formulation, composition, name, and physical properties to the product at the time of initial acceptance.

(b) Revisions: Any product changes, other than name, will require a new Preliminary Product Evaluation Information Form, certified test report, materials technical data sheet, installation instructions, and MSDS. Essentially, the product will be treated as a new product submission. Product name changes alone with no change on formulation will require a certified letter requesting the name change.

(2) Products will be removed from the QPL for any of the following reasons:

(a) The Department changes specifications or standards that prevent the use of a particular product.

(b) Vendors fail to satisfactorily respond to inquiries or maintain contact with the Chairman/Coordinator. This shall include the required re-certification requirements mentioned above.

(c) Failure of the product to perform in the field. A feedback form is provided on the QPL website for notifying the Product Evaluation Coordinator of issues regarding the performance of new and existing products used in the field. Negative feedback reported on the form may lead to removal of a product from the QPL.

(d) Non-use of a product for a period of two years or more may result in removal from the QPL.

(e) Products will be removed from the QPL when they: become obsolete, are no longer manufactured, or are requested to be removed by the vendor. The recertification process is an excellent opportunity to notify the Department of obsolete items as well as Company points of contact and address changes.

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(3) Products that are removed from the QPL, for any reason, may be resubmitted for consideration, after a moratorium period of one year; if the vendor can demonstrate to the Committee's satisfaction that the root cause for removal from the list has been addressed.

PROMOTION AND USE OF QUALIFIED PRODUCTS

MaineDOT's internal and external partners are made aware of products that the Committee has prequalified through the Maine Department of Transportation's website where they will find a tabulated list of those products. However, they are under no obligation to specify or use specific products once this committee has prequalified them for use.

Vendors or manufacturers wishing to promote the use of their product(s) after receiving committee prequalification should consider the following:

(1) Vendors or manufacturers of products that meet the requirements of the current "Maine DOT Standard Specifications" may wish to contact contractors who have been awarded construction projects that will need the particular product. The identities of the Contractor, types and quantities of materials to be used in new construction projects can be found in the "bid tabs" which can be found in the Department's online "Construction Bid Packages, Projects Under Advertisement." This website is maintained by the Maine Department of Transportation, Bureau of Project Development, Capital Resource Unit, Contract & Specification Section, and any questions pertaining to this site should be addressed directly to them.

(2) Products prequalified for use by the Committee for which a Standard Specification is not applicable may be designed into a specific project by a Department Project Design Engineer. A Special Provision will be prepared by the design engineer and included in the contract documents to define the requirements for, and quantities of, products to be used. As stated earlier, Project Design Engineers are made aware of new products through the QPL. However, vendors or manufacturers may wish to periodically mail product information flyers to Department Design & Maintenance Branch Units indicating that the product is available and that it has been prequalified for use by the Product Evaluation Committee.

(3) In addition to constructing new projects, MaineDOT is responsible for maintaining over 8,000 miles of roadway and more than 2,500 bridges, and 18 ferry terminals. Maintenance of these facilities is directed through the Augusta, Maine Main Office and through the Department's five Regional Offices located throughout the state. Vendors or manufacturers may wish to promote these types of products to Regional Managers and Bridge Maintenance Managers.