



# **Certified Building Official, Certified Building Official Limited, & Accessibility Specialist Certification Examination Guide**

The Licensing Unit of the Department of Labor and Industry provides this guide to individuals applying for Building Official, Building Official Limited, or Accessibility Specialist certification. The guide contains information about the exams and process, however it **does not** contain all of the information an applicant needs to apply for these individual certifications and pass the respective exam.

The examination format, difficulty, and length has not changed since July 2006.

**This examination guide is based on the following resources:**

- **Minnesota Statutes § 326B**
- **Minnesota Rules 1350 Manufactured Homes**
- **Minnesota Rules 1360 Prefabricated Buildings**
- **Minnesota Rules 1361 Industrialized/Modular Buildings**
- **Minnesota Building Code, 2020 edition** (including all state amendments)
- **Minnesota Residential Code, 2020 edition** (including all state amendments, Minnesota Rule 1322 Residential Energy Code, and MN Rule 1303 Minnesota Specific Provisions)
- **Minnesota Accessibility Code, 2020 edition**

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# Examination

## Purpose

The department requires individuals to pass an examination to be certified as a Building Official, Building Official Limited, or Accessibility Specialist. Passing the examination shows an applicant's ability to apply skills and knowledge gained through education, training, and/or experience. Certification demonstrates to the public that an individual is qualified.

This guide has the following information about the Building Official, Building Official Limited, and Accessibility Specialist certification examinations:

- Subject matter
- Question format
- Examination format and length
- Examination length
- Time allowed for completing the examination
- Examination process and rules

## General Examination Information

Applicants cannot ask questions to department staff monitoring the examination. The examination instructions, questions, and answers do not require any further explanation.

Examination questions test knowledge needed to become a Building Official, Building Official Limited, or Accessibility Specialist.

The department provides current statutes and codes as reference materials along with a standard desktop calculator for applicants to use during the examination. The calculator includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square root, and percentage functions. The reference materials are available for the entire exam. However, applicants should not rely on the reference materials to answer all the questions.

**No other materials or electronic devices, including cell phones, are allowed in the building.**

Applicants will automatically fail the examination and be required to submit a new application, including required fees, for the following actions:

- Giving assistance to or receiving it from anyone, including those who are also taking the examination;
- Copying questions or making notes regarding questions; or
- Leaving the building before completing the examination.

Applicants may leave the examination room to use the restroom within the building.

The department may electronically monitor the examination room.

Applicants may only view examination materials during the examination because they are classified as nonpublic data per Minnesota Statutes §13.34. This ensures the fairness and integrity of the examination process.

## Question Format

Examination questions require applicants to show they have the skills and knowledge needed for the respective

certification. The department designed the examinations to test an applicant’s ability to apply knowledge and the building code to situations they may encounter. In order to assess applicants, the examinations have:

- Multiple choice questions with answer selections that could be correct. An applicant’s knowledge will allow them to determine which of the reasonable answers is correct.
- Questions with unnecessary information that test an applicant’s ability to determine what information is important to answer the question correctly.
- The information contained in the question will direct applicants to apply their knowledge of the subject area or code to arrive at the correct answer.

All examination questions are multiple choice. The question or statement will be followed by five answer options that you may select from. The examination has different multiple choice question formats:

- Questions that require applicants to select more than one answer period the question will state how many answers must be selected.
- Questions phrased negatively so applicants must select the answer options that do not apply. Applicants must select the answer option that is **not** correct. All other answer options are correct.

Additional information:

- As many as five different versions of the same examination may be given on the same day.
- The Department may modify the examinations up to three times during a code adoption cycle.
- The Department accepts suggestions and questions about the examinations, and may use them to develop future examinations.

### **Building Official & Building Official Limited Examination Difficulty**

The certification category an applicant applies for determines the difficulty of the examination and its questions. The Building Official exam contains a higher level of questions that require a more in depth overview of the Minnesota Building Code, and allows those certified to enforce and administer a greater level of authority. The Building Official Limited exam contains fewer questions from the Minnesota Building Code and allows those certified to administer the building code to a level allowed by Minnesota Rules 1800.5200.

### **Length of Examination**

Below is the number of questions on each examination and the length of time an applicant has to complete it.

<b>Certification Examination</b>	<b>Number of Examination Questions</b>	<b>Time Provided</b>
Certified Building Official	150	5.5 hours
Certified Building Official Limited	120	4.5 hours
Accessibility Specialist	40	2 hours

### **Scoring**

- All questions have the same point value.
- Partial points are not granted. Applicants will receive full credit for answering the question correctly. If a question is answered incorrectly, then no points are given.
- Applicants will pass the examination if they answer 70 percent of the questions correctly.

### **Examination Results**

- The department will mail results within two weeks of the examination.
- Results cannot be provided to applicants by telephone or email.

- **If an applicant passes**, a letter containing instructions about obtaining certification will be sent.
- **If an applicant fails**, a letter containing instructions about how to retake the examination will be sent. Applicants must wait 30 days after receiving results before reapplying.

### Examination Review

- The department rechecks examinations that are within five percentage points of passing.
- The department **will not** provide a written or oral review of an applicant’s examination . However, applicants may submit a written comment to the licensing unit about specific examination questions.

## Sample Questions

Below are examples of the question formats used in the examinations. The knowledge areas used in the sample questions may not apply to examinations for all certification categories.

1. Which **three** of the following requirements specifically apply to conventionally framed floor cantilevers?
  - A. Floor cantilever spans shall not exceed the nominal depth of the wood floor joist.
  - B. Floor cantilevers are not permitted when an exterior deck is attached to the floor framing.
  - C. Floor cantilevers supporting an exterior balcony are permitted to be constructed in accordance with Table R502.3.3(2).
  - D. Floor cantilevers are permitted to exceed the nominal depth of the joist if the joists are doubled.
  - E. Floor cantilevers constructed in accordance with Table R502.3.3 (1) shall be permitted when supporting a light-framed bearing wall and roof only.

**Answers: A, C, E      Reference: IRC R502.3.3**

This question demonstrates “multiple correct answers” multiple-choice question format.

2. Which of the five statements listed below **does not** correctly state code requirements pertaining to tenant separations in a Covered Mall building?
  - A. Tenant spaces are not required to be separated from the mall.
  - B. Each tenant space shall be separated from other tenant spaces by a fire partition complying with Section 708.
  - C. A tenant separation wall is not required in attic or ceiling spaces above tenant separation walls.
  - D. Tenant spaces shall be separated from each other by a 2 hour fire wall.
  - E. Tenant separation walls shall have a fire-resistance of not less than 1 hour.

**Answer: D      Reference IBC 402 and IBC 708**

This question is phrased negatively. All answers are correct except for one. Applicants are asked to select the one answer that does not meet the condition in the question.

3. The maximum allowable floor area per floor, without allowable area increases, for a two story, Type V-B, Group B occupancy that has 3 different tenants including a bank, an outpatient clinic, and post office in the basement is limited to \_\_\_\_\_ square feet.

- A. 9,000
- B. 27,000
- C. 18,000
- D. 3,000
- E. 13,500

**Answer: A     Reference IBC Table 503**

This question has unnecessary information about the building tenants. It tests an applicant's ability to ignore that information and focus on the items that are important.

4. Only one exit stairway is required from the second floor of a single family dwelling unit. A second stairway is shown on the plan that connects the second floor with the first floor and basement. The second stairway must meet the following?
- A. The stairway must be in a vertical exit enclosure in accordance with IBC 1020.1.
  - B. The stairway is not required to comply with rise and run requirements.
  - C. The stairway is not required to comply with headroom requirements of R311.7.2.
  - D. There may be reduced sized landings at each floor level.
  - E. Stairways must meet all of the requirements of section R311.7.

**Answer: E     Reference IRC R311.1**

This question is a typical multiple choice question. It asks an applicant to select one of the answer options provided.

## Formulas and Calculations

The examinations require applicants to use mathematical formulas and calculations. The examples provided are basic and do not include all of the formulas and calculations an applicant must be familiar with in order to pass.

The knowledge applicants have gained through practical experience is useful, but other resources are necessary to find examples of more complicated calculations and formulas. Studying other resources will help to be as prepared as possible.

### Units of Measurement

All questions and answers use the inch-pound unit system.

### Percentages

A percentage is the ratio of a whole number to 100. To express the percentage (%) as a decimal value, divide the percentage by 100.

Sample Percentage Questions:

**What is 70% of 140?**

The percentage amount is divided by 100 to obtain the decimal value:

$$70 \div 100 = .70$$

Then, 140 is multiplied by .70

$$140 \times .70 = 98$$

**Answer: 98**

### **What is the result of increasing 120 by 25%?**

The percentage amount is divided by 100:

$$25 \div 100 = .25$$

Then, 120 is multiplied by .25:

$$120 \times .25 = 30$$

30 is then added to the original value of 120

$$30 + 120 = 150$$

**Answer: 150**

### **Equations**

An algebraic formula is a type of equation that shows the relationship among different variables. If the formula is known, then the opposite function can be performed on both sides of the equation to isolate the unknown variable.

For example, a simple formula is  $a + b = c$ . If  $a = 7$  and  $c = 10$ , then the equation is:

$7 + b = 10$ . To determine what the unknown  $b$  variable is you subtract 7 from each side of the equal sign:

$$7 + b - 7 = 10 - 7$$

$$\mathbf{b = 3}$$

If the formula is known then the opposite function can be performed on both sides of the equation to produce a variation of the equation. Using the formula  $a + b = c$ , it may be changed by subtracting  $a$  or  $b$  from both sides resulting in the equations:

$$\mathbf{a = c - b \text{ OR } b = c - a.}$$

# Examination Knowledge Areas

The following table generally identifies knowledge areas included in examinations by certification type.

Knowledge Areas	Certification type		
	BO	BOL	AS
<b>Code Administration</b>			
Authority to adopt and administer code	X	X	X
Permits, exempt work	X	X	X
Appeals	X	X	X
Codes and standards	X	X	X
Site plans, building plans, moved buildings	X	X	X
Required inspections	X	X	X
Alternate construction methods	X	X	X
Fees	X		
Recycling space	X		
<b>Minnesota Building Code, Minnesota Residential Code</b>			
Building allowable area and height	X		
Occupancy classification	X	X	
Types of construction	X		
Fire walls, fire separation, occupancy separation	X	X	
Exits, stairways, handrails, guards	X	X	
Footings, foundations, slabs	X	X	
Soil bearing	X	X	
Snow loads, wind loads	X	X	
Frost depth	X	X	
Wood framing details	X	X	
Habitable rooms	X	X	
Interior finishes	X	X	
Safety glazing	X	X	
Mezzanines	X		
Sprinkler requirements, hazard levels, standpipes	X		
Smoke alarms, power source	X	X	
Thermal barriers	X		
Masonry fireplaces, chimneys	X	X	
Exterior plaster, veneer	X	X	
Sound transmission control	X	X	
Heating facilities	X	X	
Roofing	X	X	
Ventilation	X	X	
Vapor barriers	X	X	
Prefabricated buildings	X	X	
Industrialized modular buildings	X	X	
Manufactured homes	X	X	



Knowledge Areas	Certification type		
	BO	BO-L	AS
<b>Minnesota Accessibility Code</b>			
Accessible routes	X	X	X
Parking spaces	X	X	X
Building entrances	X	X	X
Floor surfaces	X	X	X
Accessible floor levels	X	X	X
Ramps, walks, slopes	X	X	X
Restrooms, toilet compartments, showers	X	X	X
Plumbing fixtures	X	X	X
<b>Minnesota Rule 1322 Residential Energy</b>			
Procedure Criteria	X	X	
Residential Energy Administration	X	X	
Material, Systems and Equipment	X	X	
Thermal Envelope	X	X	
<b>Minnesota Rule 1303 Radon Control</b>			
Definitions	X	X	
Requirements for passive control	X	X	
Requirements for active radon control	X	X	

Applicants are expected to be familiar with the knowledge areas for the certification type. However, the examination may not test familiarity with all knowledge areas.

# Summary of Your Disability Rights

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) require the Department of Labor and Industry to provide reasonable accommodations and modifications for qualified individuals with disabilities who are applying for a license, taking a test, and accessing a facility. The accommodation must be requested, be necessary and not create an undue burden.

- A qualified individual must meet the essential eligibility requirements for the license sought.
- A person with a disability has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits the major life activity.
- A person with a disability is substantially limited when his or her impairment causes significant difficulty, effort, and time to perform a major life activity in comparison to most people in the general population. A major life activity includes: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, sitting, reaching, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, interacting with others and working.

If you have questions, call:

- ADA - 1-800-514-3001 (voice) or 1-800-514-0383 (TTY)
- MHRH - 1-800-657-3704 (voice) or 1-800-627-3529 (Minnesota Relay)

If you are a qualified individual with a disability and need reasonable accommodation to apply for a license take a test or access a facility:

- Fill in, sign and date the [Reasonable Accommodation Request Form](#);
- Sign in date the data practices act form; and
- Mail or drop off both forms to DLI with your application for examination form.

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry  
 CCLD Licensing and Certification Services  
 443 Lafayette Road North  
 St. Paul, MN 55155  
 Phone: (651) 284-5031  
 Fax: (651) 284-5743  
 Email: [dli.license@state.mn.us](mailto:dli.license@state.mn.us)  
[www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov)

## Reasonable Accommodation Request Form

**All requests must first be approved by DLI’s Construction Codes and Licensing Division. Candidates must wait for confirmation of the approval before applying, scheduling an examination or accessing a facility.**

Last name	First name	M.I.	Date
Street address	City	State	Zip code
Phone number	Email address		
Describe the accommodation you want (equipment, reader, extra testing time, etc.)			
Describe any accommodation DLI has provided you in the past			

An individual who has a physical or mental disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, or the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) may request an accommodation to apply for a license, take an examination or access a facility.

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) will provide an accommodation unless it creates an undue burden. DLI will contact the requestor upon receipt of required documents and after a determination is made. An examination will be scheduled and confirmed directly with the applicant.

If you wish to request an accommodation, send the following to DLI’s CCLD Licensing.

1. This accommodation request form – filled in, signed and dated.
2. A written statement from your health care provider (on letterhead, signed and dated by your health care provider) documenting: the nature of your disability; what major life activity your disability substantially limits; and the type of reasonable accommodation needed to apply for a license, take a license test or access a building.
3. The attached Licensing ADA data practices notice – signed and dated.

**Note:** If you are requesting an accommodation to take a license test, also include your Application for Examination form along with the above documents.

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Office use only

Application number \_\_\_\_\_ Approved date \_\_\_\_\_ Denied date \_\_\_\_\_

This material can be made available in different forms, such as audio, Braille or large print by calling (651) 284-5005 or 1-800-342-5354.

## CCLD Licensing ADA/MHRA Data Practices Notice

Pursuant to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes § 13.04, subd. 2, the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) is asking you to supply private or confidential data concerning your request for reasonable accommodation or modification as governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and/or the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA).

**Sign and date below after you have fully read, understand and agree to the following.**

- I authorize the DLI Construction Codes and Licensing Division's (CCLD's), Licensing Section and any other authorized division within DLI to receive and review my medical information to determine whether I have a disability and my need for reasonable accommodation.
- I understand the medical information being requested shall be provided to DLI's CCLD Licensing Section within 15 days of written request. If the requested information is not provided within 15 days of request, reasonable accommodation may be delayed or denied.
- I authorize any authorized personnel from DLI to contact my health care provider to clarify and authenticate medical information should it be deemed incomplete or insufficient and I fail to resolve any deficiency within seven days of written request from DLI.
- I understand I may refuse to provide DLI with the requested medical information. However, I understand refusal may result in reasonable accommodation being delayed or denied.
- I understand the medical information I provide may be accessed by authorized DLI personnel to determine eligibility under the ADA/MHRA and released to other persons or entities authorized by state or federal law.

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Signature of person requesting accommodation

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Date

# Scheduling Examinations

**Do not schedule an examination until you receive notification that the Department approved your application.** The Department must verify that an applicant qualifies for a license before the examination is scheduled. Applicants will be directed to the department's website to schedule an examination

The department will not schedule dates for individuals who have not received written approval for of their application

Applicants must schedule their examinations. Walk-ins are not permitted. Applicants may reschedule their examination one time. The Department will deny applications of individuals that fail to appear for a rescheduled examination.

Applicants that have failed the examination must apply to retest, submit the fee, and qualify for another examination date.

For more information about exam dates, location and scheduling, visit:

<http://www.dli.mn.gov/business/get-licenses-and-permits/license-exam-schedule>

## Examination Day

- Applicants must arrive at least 30 minutes before their examination is scheduled to begin.
- The Department requires applicants to present photo ID before they are allowed to take the examination.
- Applicants are allowed to bring food and beverages into the examination room.

## Location

[The Department of Labor and Industry](#) building is located at 443 Lafayette Rd North, Saint Paul, north of the intersection of Interstate 94 in US highway 52 (Lafayette Rd North), northeast of downtown Saint Paul.

The “**Approved for Examination**” letter contains specific instructions for those scheduled to take the examination in Saint Paul or at a site in greater Minnesota.

# Qualifications for Certification

Minnesota Rules 1301.0300 describes the qualifications the department requires for Building Official, Building Official Limited, and Accessibility Specialist certification. An applicant qualifies for certification with education, national certifications, municipal code administration experience, and/or construction related experience

## Military Experience

The department allows applicants to use military experience as a qualification for certification. A copy of the DD Form 214, Certification of Release or Discharge from Active Duty must be included with the application. Military experience may be used as a qualification, if the applicant had specific skilled participation in:

- Construction of foundations.
- Construction of superstructures.
- Installation of mechanical, plumbing, electrical, or fire suppression systems.

# Reciprocal Agreements

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry does not have reciprocal agreements with other states for Building Official, Building Official Limited, or Accessibility Specialist certification. If an individual has received certification from another state, they must still apply for certification in Minnesota and take the examination.

# Continuing Education Requirements

The department requires a certified Building Official, Building Official Limited, and Accessibility Specialist to complete continuing education every two years in order to maintain their certification. [Minnesota Statutes § 326B.133](#) describes the continuing education requirements for each certification category.

Continuing education completed during a two year cycle is only valid for that to your cycle. If additional continuing education beyond department requirements is obtained, it cannot be applied towards the next certification renewal cycle.

The department approves continuing education. [Minnesota Rules 1301.1000](#) lists approved continuing education courses. The department approves other courses that meet the requirements of Minnesota Statutes 326B.0981. subd. 5 and have content that is useful to Building Officials, Building Officials Limited, and Accessibility Specialists.

# Certification and Examination Application

For a Building Official, or Building Official Limited & Accessibility Specialist certification, visit: <http://www.dli.mn.gov/workers/building-officials/how-become-building-official-building-official-limited-and-accessibility>

**Upon request this document can be made available in alternative formats (Braille, large print, or audio).**