



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

30 MAR 2007

CECW-CP

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Peer Review Process

1. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers independent technical review (ITR) and peer review processes are essential to improving project safety and quality of the products we provide to the American people. We have an effective ITR process for planning and engineering products that must be strengthened. The 2002 report on "Review Procedures for Water Resources Project Planning" from the National Research Council and the recent Interagency Performance Evaluation Taskforce (IPET) report clearly show the importance of external peer review in improving our plans, projects and programs.

2. We implemented a more comprehensive peer review process in May of 2005 when we published EC 1105-2-408 "Peer Review of Decision Documents" that established a thoughtful, balanced peer review process. This EC adopted most of the NRC recommendations and implemented the OMB guidelines on peer review. It requires that peer review approaches be customized for each effort. Depending on the particular circumstances, reviews may be conducted entirely within the Corps, entirely by external panels, or in various combinations. I held a VTC in August 2005 with all the MSCs to emphasize the importance of this guidance. The basic components and requirements of the EC are:

- Applies to all studies & reports needing authorization
- Strengthens Independent Technical Review (ITR)
- Establishes External Peer Review (EPR) in cases of high risk, complexity, or precedent-setting approaches
- Assigns management of ITR and EPR to the Planning Centers of Expertise
- ITR and EPR are cost shared
- Review Plans must be published and available for public comment (http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/cecw-cp/peer/peer_rev.html)
- Review and response must be completed prior to Civil Works Review Board presentation

3. Effective immediately, these additional requirements will further strengthen our peer review processes. First, consistent with the guidance issued by memorandum on 8 November 2006 (Support to Planning Centers of Expertise), the applicability of

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EC 1105-2-408 is extended to all studies and reports needing authorization, regardless of the date the FCSA was signed, except for only those cases where the submittal of the final feasibility report package (per EC 1105-2-405) has already been forwarded to HQ as of this date.

4. Commanders need to be actively involved in establishing robust peer review approaches for all of your products. Review Plans must anticipate and define the appropriate level of review from the very start of the effort. In developing Review Plans, you are responsible for closely coordinating with the Planning Centers of Expertise and for seeking and incorporating comments from the public. This engagement will ensure that the peer review approach is responsive to our wide array of stakeholders and customers, both within and outside the Federal Government.

5. I ask that you specifically review your decisions on the level of peer review and consider when external peer review may be appropriate. To date, the number of instances where external peer review has been recommended has fallen short of expectations. We need to routinely incorporate independent expertise into our processes to assure we are providing the best possible service to the Nation. External peer review will continue to be required per EC 1105-2-408 and the Office of Management and Budget's "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review" (Dec. 2004) in cases where information is based on novel methods, presents complex challenges for interpretation, contains precedent-setting methods or models, presents conclusions that are likely to change prevailing practices, addresses important public safety risks or is likely to affect policy decisions that have a significant impact. External peer review panels will accomplish a concurrent review that covers the entire decision document. The panel will address all the underlying engineering, economics, and environmental work, not just one aspect of the project.

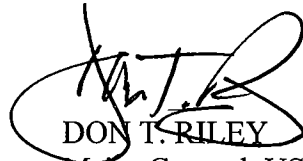
6. We will report on and measure the requirement that review plans in the Project Management Plans be complete, comprehensive and current. MSCs will review decisions on the level of peer review for all cases and determine where external peer review may be appropriate. In coordination with the Planning Centers of Expertise, Districts will publish the review plans and engage public comment as required by the Information Quality Act and current guidance. We will maintain and distribute a list of all review plans posted compared against a list of all active studies for discussion at monthly PRB's, quarterly DMR's and CMR's. MSCs will also track and report the number of EPR's underway and the number of EPR's completed through P2.

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7. Finally, for studies with a FCSA signed after 31 May 2005, Districts will post review plans and get MSC approval within thirty days of this memorandum. MSCs will report the results at the next CMR. Starting with FY 08, Districts must post review plans and get MSC approval prior to allocation of funds.

8. It is vitally important that we employ a dynamic independent review process in fulfilling our responsibility to provide the Nation with sound water resources solutions. We are continuing to improve our peer review guidance and processes. Planning and Engineering are currently developing seamless guidance for peer review of all Civil Works projects from initial planning through design, construction, turnover to sponsors and O&MRR&R. The requirements with this memorandum will also be incorporated and further elaborated in Corps guidance. The Corps will adopt and continue to strengthen a more open and vigorous peer review process.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



DON T. RILEY
Major General, USA
Director of Civil Works

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