



General Information on Certifications¹

Matters relating to design, construction, and building products carry many different types and levels of certifications. Before you rely on a statement that someone or some thing is “certified” or has a “certification,” please take the time to verify the meaning of the particular designation. In some cases, certification will mean that a strict standard has been met, but in other cases, certification is mostly a selling point.

The term “certification” is generally defined as a certificate attesting the truth of some statement or event or the formal assertion in writing of some fact.

■ In some cases, certification is a type of licensure. In the design and construction fields, these include:

- State certified construction contractors, including general, building, residential, sheet metal, roofing, air-conditioning, mechanical, commercial pool and spa, residential pool and spa, swimming pool and spa servicing, plumbing, underground utility and excavation, solar, pollutant storage systems, electrical, and alarm contractors
- Certification of building code administration and inspection personnel
- Threshold building inspector certification, provided for licensed and qualified architects and engineers
- Certification to provide energy efficiency ratings
- Use of the term “certified” is also applied to certificates of authority or authorization for business entities involved in the practice of architecture, interior design,

construction or electrical contracting, engineering, or landscape architecture

■ Certification can also apply to products, components, or systems. Examples include:

- Recertification of manufactured buildings prior to moving or changing (section 553.375, Florida Statutes)
- Manufactured building manufacturer certification (section 553.381, Florida Statutes)
- Factory-built school buildings subject to certification (section 553.415, Florida Statutes)
- Certifications associated with product evaluation and approval (section 553.842, Florida Statutes)
- Certifications by qualified construction contractors for alternative methodologies for wind resistance (section 553.79, Florida Statutes)

■ Certification can be required for standards or programs, including:

- Federal certification of the Florida Accessibility Code for Building Construction (section 553.502, Florida Statutes)
- Certification as to energy conservation standards (section 553.971, Florida Statutes)

■ Specifications for certifications also exist, including:

- Certification agencies for products that comply with standards specified in the Florida Building Code (section 553.842, Florida Statutes)
- Certification mark from a qualified or approved agency (section 553.842, Florida Statutes) (one of the most commonly seen is UL or Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.)

¹**DISCLAIMER** – This piece is intended to give the reader only general factual information current at the time of publication. This piece is **not** a substitute for professional advice and should not be used for guidance or decisions related to a specific design or construction project. This piece is not intended to reflect the opinion of any of the entities, agencies or organizations identified in the materials and, if any opinions appear, are those of the individual author and should not be relied upon in any event. Applicable to 2004 Florida Building Code.

- Certifications that can be provided by licensed architects or engineers (sections 553.8425 and 553.791, Florida Statutes)

The certifications listed above are all referenced in Florida law, but the designation is not reserved for use by government agencies alone.

There are perhaps thousands of different types of certifications provided through private educational, accreditation, trade, professional, evaluation, testing, and quality assurance entities.

Certifications associated with educational, trade, or professional entities are based on a wide variety of factors, including:

- Amount or years of experience
- Level of education
- Specific type(s) of training
- Standard(s) of excellence
- Level of achievement

Certifications associated with accreditation, evaluation, testing, and quality assurance can apply to a product or a process (such as a manufacturing process) and can be based on many different measures, including:

- Compliance with a minimum or maximum standard
- Strength or endurance testing
- Safety or protection standards
- Quality achievement or rating

Most (if not all) of these entities make information available to the public about the process, standards, and qualifications used to determine each particular type of certification. The best way to obtain this information is to ascertain and contact the source issuing the

particular certification. Most certifications will reference (in the name of or with the certification) the originating source, and contact information can generally be found by a simple online or library search.

Don't know where to go for an answer to a specific question?

Contact: Building A Safer Florida, Inc. 1-850-222-2772 or www.buildingasaferflorida.org

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