

July 26, 2012

TO: State Directors
Rural Development

ATTN: Single-Family Housing (SFH) Program Directors, Multi-Family Housing (MFH) Program Directors, Community Facilities (CF) Program Directors, Loan Specialists, Public Information Coordinators (PICs)

FROM: Tammye Treviño *(Signed by Tammye Treviño)*
Administrator
Rural Housing Service

SUBJECT: Guidance on Approval of Plans and Specifications using Alternative Building Materials and Methods

Introduction

This unnumbered letter provides guidance to the Program Directors and Loan Specialists on the approval of building plans and specifications using alternative building materials and methods.

In recent years, there have been improvements in building technologies that are designed to address issues related to energy efficiency and healthier homes and buildings. While some of these products and systems, meet building code requirements and have been in use for many years, they may not be as readily available as standard products and methods because they have not yet become familiar to the mainstream building industry. They may also be less likely to have become popular yet in rural areas.

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service supports the use of building materials and methods that will improve the energy-efficiency and health of homes and buildings provided that these methods and products meet the code requirements of the jurisdiction in which the project will be constructed, and can be utilized within the project's scope and budget.

EXPIRATION DATE:
September 30, 2012

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:
Housing Programs

An example of a building method that is becoming more common is construction of single family homes and low-rise multifamily housing with Structural Insulated Panel Systems. These are pre-assembled walls that are designed to be more energy-efficient and require less labor than standard frame construction.

Single Family Housing Plan Certification

Section §1924.5 (f)(1) requires certification of building plans for all single family housing. If the project has indeed been certified as meeting building codes and our regulations, then the project is eligible to be funded. If there are questions or concerns regarding any material, method or procedure for design or construction, consult the state architect for assistance.

Conclusion

It is important for loan specialists to work closely with state architects when there are any questions about alternative building materials and methods.

Any suggestions, comments or suggestions on this Unnumbered Letter should be directed to Meghan Walsh, Architect, Program Support Staff, (202) – 205-9590, [Meghan.Walsh@wdc.usda.gov](mailto: Meghan.Walsh@wdc.usda.gov) or William Downs, Chief Architect, Program Support Staff, (202) 720-1499, [William.Downs@wdc.usda.gov](mailto: William.Downs@wdc.usda.gov).