

Understanding and Applying HSW Requirements

Michael D. Chambers FAIA FCSI

michael@mcaspecs.com

I have observed much confusion and inconsistency in applying the HSW standards to AIA/CES and MCE programs. I have attended programs offered with HSW that were very marginal and some offered without HSW that clearly qualified. It is extremely important that the HSW credit be applied consistently to education programs to avoid possible confusion and auditing problems, especially with State Registration Boards.

The AIA/CES Provider's Guide, provides a HSW definition and a compilation of HSW subject areas that should make assigning HSW credits fairly straight forward. Remember, 75% of the program must meet the HSW standard. The definition of HSW is as follows:

- *Planning and predesign*
- *Site Design*
- *Building design, including interior architecture*
- *Structural elements of the practice of architecture*
- *Mechanical elements of the practice of architecture*
- *Electrical elements of the practice of architecture*
- *Plumbing elements of the practice of architecture*
- *Construction materials and methods*
- *Construction documents*

The Provider's Guide also states "*Health, safety, and welfare in architecture are hereafter defined as anything that relates to the structural integrity or soundness of a building or building site. HSW protects the public and may be defined and required by law*".

I do not believe that the application of the HSW credit is supposed to be difficult or confusing, rather it should ensure that architects study subject areas that are germane to the science of architecture rather than art or business. When I determine the applicability of HSW credits for a program, I first determine if it is art, science, or business. If it is science, then I determine which of the definition categories it fits in and how it impacts the public health, safety, and welfare. If it is art or business I first ascertain if there is any impact on the public health, safety, and welfare, if there is then I try to fit the program into one of the definition categories. Unless I can clearly assess HSW impact and get a good category fit I will not assign HSW credits.

For instance, insurance is a gray area. If the program deals with understanding and specifying insurance requirements in contract documents to protect the owner's property and injured parties during the course of the project, it would clearly be HSW. However, if the program was on liability insurance for design professionals it would not qualify for HSW, since it does not directly impact the public health, safety, or welfare. Software training, business practices, marketing, and firm management generally do not meet the HSW standard.

In the area of art, my suggestion would be that finishes would generally not meet HSW standards, but finishes that also waterproof, the design of a highly articulated curtainwall, or an entry canopy would, because it has solid structural and building envelope issues that clearly impact HSW.

I do not believe that any of this is terribly obtuse or difficult. If you apply a clear logic to assigning HSW credits you should not have any problems with future audits. I highly recommend that if your state is requiring MCE you should review their requirements for HSW. It may require a 2-tier system for offering HSW since some states may define HSW more strictly than does AIA.

Michael D. Chambers FAIA FCSI CCS is principal of MCA Specifications, Construction Product Marketing Group of Daly City, CA. MCA designs, develops, and produces guide specifications, technical data sheets, AIA/CES Continuing Education programs, and design guidelines for construction product manufacturers. MCA provides preliminary document, education program, and web site reviews to help manufacturers be more effective and strategic with their critical marketing tools. 415-239-6566 www.mcaspecs.com