

Accordingly, the following changes are proposed at § 650.313(k):

1. A new provision would be added to the NBIS that requires States to implement a systematic quality control and quality assurance program;

2. No specific requirements would be given, but general guidelines would be provided to require the program to include periodic field review of inspection teams and their work to ensure uniformity and completeness and to review inspection reports and load rating computations; and

3. The program would be required to be submitted to the FHWA for approval. This would allow the FHWA to work closely with the States to develop and implement these programs.

The Oregon DOT suggested that the FHWA amend the NBIS to strengthen the need for critical follow-up and define what structures are required to be included. Additionally, the commenter requested that the FHWA clearly indicate a requirement for each State to initiate a process to follow-up on critical findings.

The FHWA evaluated the need to strengthen the follow-up on critical findings and specify what structures are required to be included. The following changes are proposed at § 650.313(l):

1. A new provision would be added in the NBIS to require States to establish a critical follow-up program;

2. The FHWA proposes to require that States notify the FHWA of actions taken to assure public safety in response to the critical findings reported by the inspectors; and

3. The FHWA believes it is not appropriate to establish a nationwide definition of the criteria for which bridges should be included in the critical follow-up program. The FHWA proposes to allow the States the discretion, in cooperation with the FHWA, to define the criteria.

Proposed Section 650.315 Inventory

Almost all comments received indicated that the NBIS reporting requirements were reasonable and need not be changed. The Florida DOT indicated that the States should be relieved of the requirement to maintain data on Federal agency bridges in its State. The Delaware DOT commented that the FHWA should not be concerned with the 90 or 180 days requirement that the State, Federal agency or other bridge owner has to enter new or changed data into their inventory.

The FHWA proposes a “§ 650.315 Inventory” to replace the current “§ 650.311 Inventory.” In paragraph (a), the FHWA proposes to add language requiring Federal agencies to be responsible for the inspection, inventory and reporting of data regarding bridges under their authority/control. The FHWA feels that this will ensure the best representation of the bridges owned by the Federal agencies. This practice has been in place since 1995 and the language will reflect the current practice. Since the Federal agencies have been inventorying and reporting their own bridges, the number of federally owned bridges has grown from just over 4,000 to over 7,000 bridges. The FHWA also proposes in paragraph (a) to add language that will accommodate future changes/updates to the “Recording and Coding Guide for the Structure Inventory and Appraisal of the Nation’s Bridges,” December 1995 (the Guide). The FHWA feels that this will clarify that the most current version of the Guide is to be used in instances where updates will be made to the Guide.

In paragraphs (b), (c) and (d), the FHWA proposes to add language that will change the time that the Federal agency has to enter new or revised data into the inventory from 180 to 90 days from change in bridge status, bridge load restriction, bridge closure status or bridge inspection. The FHWA feels that

this aligns better with the State requirements and is in the best interest of public safety and national security. In the event of a bridge catastrophe or national or statewide emergency, the State would have on hand the most current bridge information available.

Proposed Section 650.317 Reference Manuals

There were no comments on this topic.

The FHWA proposes to create a new section entitled “Reference Manuals” to incorporate a manual, the AASHTO Manual for Condition Evaluation of Bridges (AASHTO Manual) and its 2001 interim revision. The AASHTO Manual is referred to in the current NBIS but not incorporated by reference. This manual is discussed in the proposed NBIS, and provides good guidance for the inspection and evaluation of highway bridges, and for that reason needs to be incorporated by reference.

While we are proposing to incorporate by reference the AASHTO Manual, it is important to note that the regulation on the NBIS, takes precedence over any guidance contained in the AASHTO manual. Where there may be implied or conflicting language between the two documents, the nationwide direction provided by the NBIS will always govern.

Related Rulemakings and Notices

The FHWA is also in the process of reviewing 23 CFR part 650, subpart D, Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program (HBRRP). The FHWA published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking for the HBRRP on September 26, 2001, at 66 FR 49152. Additionally, the FHWA published a final rule for 23 CFR part 650, subpart G, Discretionary Bridge Candidate Rating Factor on October 15, 2002, at 67 FR 63539.

For ease of reference the following distribution table is provided:

Old section	New section
650.301, first sentence	650.303 Revised, purpose added.
650.301, second sentence	650.305 Revised, definition of terms added.
650.303(a), portion of first sentence	650.307(a) and (c)(2) Revised, bridge inspection organization added.
None	650.305 added.
Definitions:	Definitions:
650.303(a) American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Manual definition.	Revised.
Bridge	Bridge, revised.
None	Bridge inspection experience, Added.
None	Bridge inspector's reference manual, Added.
None	Complex bridge, Added.
None	Comprehensive bridge inspection training, Added.
None	Damage inspection, Added.
None	Fracture critical inspection, Added.
None	Fracture critical member, Added.
None	Hands-on, Added.