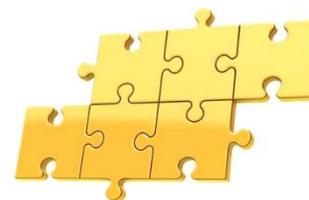# New Tools for Specifiers: the Missing Piece of the Accreditation Puzzle

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What is a Specifier?
A *specifier* is any entity that requires laboratory testing to be performed by an agency that participates in one or more of AASHTO re:source's programs. Specifiers can include departments of transportation, local municipalities, or even corporate offices that manage several branch laboratories. Some of AASHTO re:source's current specifiers include the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the California Division of the State Architect (DSA), and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Being a specifier can be challenging, and requires constant review of ever-changing laboratory information, such as proficiency sample ratings or accreditation status. In the past, tracking information for one hundred, ten, or even three laboratories was a daunting task.

All of this changed in 2011 when AASHTO re:source released new website functionality that allows specifiers to manage laboratory information more effectively. Flexibility, ease of access, and timely information are just some of the features that this new system offers. This article will explore some of these new features, which were specifically designed to make the role of specifier streamlined and easier than ever before.

Information at Your Fingertips
This new system will revolutionize the way specifiers manage laboratory information. Some of the benefits of the new system are as follows:

- **Flexibility.** Specifiers can choose what kind of information they receive, as well has how they receive it.
- **Accessibility.** Specifiers can choose to be sent emails with updates on any changes to a laboratory's information. This information can also be viewed by logging into the AASHTO re:source website.
- **Reliability.** Since the information is received directly from AASHTO re:source, specifiers can be confident in its accuracy and timeliness.
- **Scalability.** This system can be used to manage any number of laboratories from one to several hundred.
- **Manageability.** Information is displayed in a clear and concise manner. The user-friendly interface allows specifiers to update and manage information quickly and easily.

What Type of Information is Available?
Requested information regarding laboratories is delivered to specifiers in the form of alerts. The confidentiality of our customers is very important to us. Therefore, specifiers will be required to obtain permission from laboratories before they are able to view certain kinds of information. Any information that is available on our website is considered public information and may be tracked without the laboratory's consent. The following alerts are available *without* explicit consent from a laboratory:

- **Changes to Accreditation.** Indicates any new standards that are added or removed from the laboratory's accreditation listing.
- **Suspension of Accreditation.** Indicates any standards for which the laboratory has received a suspension of accreditation.
- **Reinstatement of Accreditation.** Indicates that a laboratory's accreditation has been reinstated after a period of suspension.

The following alerts are available *only with* explicit consent from the laboratory:

- **Proficiency Testing Alerts.** Indicates that the laboratory has received low ratings on AASHTO re:source proficiency samples (i.e. results that are beyond 2 standard deviations from the mean).
- **Assessment Alerts.** Indicates that an AASHTO re:source on-site assessment report has been issued.
- **Accreditation Alerts.** Indicates that corrective action responses for nonconformities noted in AASHTO re:source or CCRL on-site assessment reports have been accepted by the AASHTO Accreditation Program.

Requesting Private Information
Requesting consent to monitor private laboratory information is easy. Specifiers can search by company name or location to select laboratories that they wish to monitor. By selecting the "Request Private" feature on the website, the specifier's request will be sent to the laboratory. If the laboratory accepts the request, they will be added to the

specifier's monitor list. Specifiers can change the configuration settings to receive only the types of information that they need, as shown in the picture below.

Website or Email? You Choose!
Specifiers can elect to receive alerts by email, so that specifiers will never have to wonder whether they have the most up-to-date information on a laboratory's status. If selected, a daily summary of alerts will be generated for all laboratories on the monitor list. Specifiers will only receive one email per day with information for all laboratories that they are tracking. Emails are only generated on days when new alerts are available. The emails provide information in a concise, easy-to-follow format. These alerts will still be available when logged into the website as well. Tracking laboratory information is as easy and convenient as reading an email.

What's In It for the Laboratories?
The new specifier functionality doesn't just make life easier for specifiers; it's a time-saver for laboratories as well. Laboratories can expedite communication and reduce the use of company resources by allowing specifiers to gain access to pertinent information directly. In addition, transparency in the sharing of information with specifiers demonstrates a laboratory's credibility and confidence in their testing services. Laboratories can request to be added to a specifier's monitored list by clicking on "View / Request Specifiers" on the left-hand side of their "Laboratory Home" page. The specifier will receive the request and may decide to accept or deny it.

Getting Started
To gain access to the specifier tools available on AASHTO re:source's website, interested parties can request access online. Once submitted, AASHTO re:source staff will review the request and may call or email the point of contact for additional information. Once the process is complete, the specifier will be provided with login capabilities that allow them to access and manage laboratory information with ease.

Learn More
AASHTO re:source is very excited to offer these improved laboratory-monitoring capabilities for specifiers. Our goal is to make monitoring laboratory information as easy and simple as possible. We believe that this service is the first of its kind, setting a new standard for quality in materials testing. If you have any suggestions for improvements, or questions about the services available to specifiers, please contact Greg Uherek.

Editor's Note: This article was updated in June 2016 to ensure the more up-to-date information is presented.