

 Office of Structures <i>Guidelines and Procedures</i> <i>Memorandum</i>	INSPECTION
	Number: OOS-GPM-SI-117
	Date: 08-06-2026
Critical Findings	Approval: 

The NBIS defines Critical Finding as a structural or safety related deficiency that requires immediate action to ensure public safety.

Specifically, this includes findings which warrant any of the following:

- Full or partial closure of any bridge (see bridge closure procedures in this document)
- NSTM rating (SNBI Item B.C.14) of serious or worse condition ('3' or less)
- Deck, superstructure, substructure, or culvert rating of critical or worse condition ('2' or less)
- Channel condition or scour condition (SNBI Item B.C.09 or B.C.11) rating of critical or worse condition ('2' or less)
- Immediate load restriction or immediate repair work to remain open

When defects are found during the inspection of a structure that may qualify as critical findings, they are to be immediately phoned in to the Remedial Design Team Leader (RDTL) responsible for that structure or the County/Agency Bridge Manager.

For SHA bridges, if the RDTL considers the findings to be critical defects, the Division Chief – Structures Remedial Design shall be notified immediately and consulted for concurrence. The Deputy Director, SIRE and Director of OOS shall also be consulted for concurrence. A follow-up e-mail documenting the critical finding shall be sent to the Division Chief – Structures Inspection as soon as possible but no later than the next day.

For County/Agency bridges, after contacting the bridge owner, the Inspection Team Leader shall notify the OOS Division Chief – Structures Inspection immediately if possible but no later than the next day.

The FHWA Division Bridge Engineer shall be notified by the Division Chief – Structures Inspection immediately if possible, but no later than within 24 hours.

Bridge Closure Procedures

The following circumstances necessitate immediate bridge closure:

- Condition defect identified which is possible to cause immediate threat to public safety, including but not limited to major deterioration of primary load carrying components without sufficient redundancy
- Scour findings which pose an impending threat to the overall structural integrity of the substructure or foundation

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- Calculated gross live load capacity less than 3 tons for any legal vehicle

To report a necessary bridge closure, the following procedures shall be followed:

- For SHA bridges, the inspection team leader shall call the Structures Inspection Division Chief, followed by the Statewide Operations Center. If necessary to prevent traffic from crossing the bridge immediately, the police may be called for traffic control. If the Structures Inspection Division Chief is unavailable, secondary points of contact include the OOS Remedial Design Team Leader and the OOS SIREN Deputy Director.
- For non-SHA bridges, the inspection team leader shall call the primary point of contact for each county or local agency. Prior to all inspections, the inspection team leader shall be equipped with proper contact information for any emergency communications. If local contacts are unavailable to implement the closure immediately, the inspection team leader shall follow the communication process described for SHA bridges to ensure public safety.

Reporting

Critical findings must be documented in the Critical Finding form in SAM. The information in this form must be fully completed, and will be used to report to FHWA monthly until the critical finding follow-up actions are complete. Relevant defect or representative condition photos must be attached to the report using the Critical Finding photo category in the file attachment menu.