



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
Federal Highway  
Administration

# Memorandum

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Subject: **INFORMATION**: “Responsible Charge”

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In Reply Refer To:  
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To: Director of Field-Service  
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The issue of “responsible charge” of Federal-aid construction projects has been raised on several occasions; most recently as it relates to Federal-aid projects that are administered by local public agencies. The following attachment provides guidance on the requirements and duties of the person designated to be in “responsible charge”.

If you have any questions about the memorandum and attachment, please contact Mr. Bob Wright as [Robert.wright@dot.gov](mailto:Robert.wright@dot.gov).

Attachment

## Defining “Responsible Charge” in the Federal-aid Highway Program

### **Regulation:**

The key regulatory provision, 23 CFR 635.105 – *Supervising Agency*, provides that the State Transportation Agency (STA) is responsible for construction of Federal-aid projects, whether it or a local public agency (LPA) performs the work. The regulation provides that the STA and LPA must provide a full time employee to be in “responsible charge” of the project.

### **Requirements of Position:**

For projects administered by the STA, the regulation requires that the person in “responsible charge” be a full-time employed state engineer. This requirement applies even when consultants are providing construction engineering services.

For locally administered projects, the regulation requires that the person in “responsible charge” be a full time employee of the LPA. The regulation is silent about engineering credentials. Thus, the person in “responsible charge” of LPA administered projects need not be an engineer. This requirement applies even when consultants are providing construction engineering services.

### **Duties:**

Regardless of whether the project is administered by the STA or another agency, the person designated as being in "responsible charge" is expected to be a public employee who is accountable for a project. This person should be expected to be able to perform the following duties and functions:

- Administers inherently governmental project activities, including those dealing with cost, time, adherence to contract requirements, construction quality and scope of Federal-aid projects;
- Maintains familiarity of day to day project operations, including project safety issues;
- Makes or participates in decisions about changed conditions or scope changes that require change orders or supplemental agreements;
- Visits and reviews the project on a frequency that is commensurate with the magnitude and complexity of the project;
- Reviews financial processes, transactions and documentation to ensure that safeguards are in place to minimize fraud, waste, and abuse; and
- Directs project staff, agency or consultant, to carry out project administration and contract oversight, including proper documentation.
- Is aware of the qualifications, assignments and on-the-job performance of the agency and consultant staff at all stages of the project.

The regulations do not restrict an agency’s organizational authority over the person designated in “responsible charge," and the regulations do not preclude sharing of these

## Attachment

duties and functions among a number of public agency employees. The regulations also do not preclude one employee from having responsible charge of several projects and directing project managers assigned to specific projects.

### **Affect on Laws Regulating Licensure:**

The term “responsible charge” is used here in the context intended by the above regulation. It may or may not correspond to its usage in state laws regulating licensure of professional engineers.