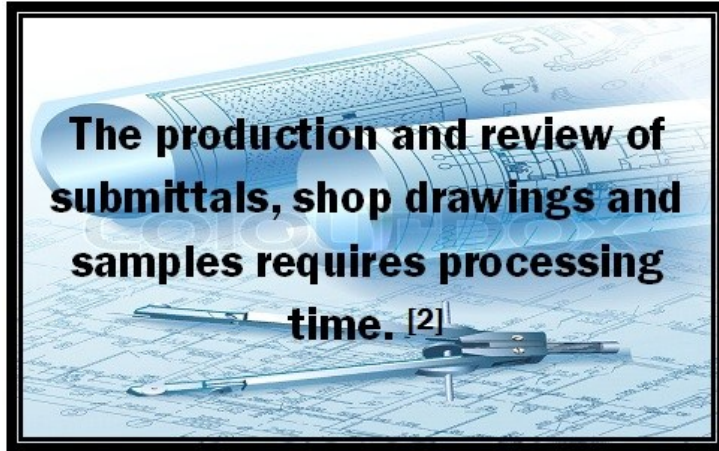


Triage of Submittals in Construction Management



The submittal process affects cost, quality, schedule, and project success. On large commercial projects, the submittal process can involve thousands of materials, fabrications, and pieces of equipment. [2]

A tragic example of a submittal that lacked due diligence is the Hyatt Regency walkway collapse at the [Hyatt Regency Kansas City](#) hotel in [Kansas City, Missouri](#), on July 17, 1981. Two vertically contiguous walkways collapsed onto a

[tea dance](#) being held in the hotel's lobby. The falling walkways killed 114 and injured 216. At the time, it was the deadliest [structural collapse](#) in U.S. history, not surpassed until the [collapse of the World Trade Center towers](#) 20 years later.[1]

Though this tragedy was the result of a design flaw, the flaw occurred due to a design change that was not given appropriate consideration and was not tested before approval. Thus, the flawed design was incorporated into the structure. Had a triage system been in place, this submittal should have been assigned a high safety rating and subjected to proper testing before approval.

As exemplified by the Hyatt Regency walkway collapse, there is a need to run submittals through a dual triage system for quality and safety control measures and for approval priority.

Simply having a rough idea or mental checklist of how to triage is not enough to affect noticeable benefits. Creating a guideline is necessary for use by the contractor and the project management team. It reinforces safety and quality standards and promotes consistency in the submittal process for every project.

Submittals can be rated by level of importance and by their adherence to exact specifications as required by the architect and engineer. When any deviation is submitted that concerns a structurally integral component of a project, it is a critical or red-level submittal requiring rigorous examination and testing to ensure that the deviation will not have a negative, possibly disastrous effect on quality and safety.

Running the submittals through a triage system to prioritize approval will make the process run more smoothly and ensure that the submittals that require the most time and drive the project toward critical milestones are tagged with the highest priority for approval.

All decision makers and team members should be involved in creating a triage guide that is easily understood and can be initiated. This should be done during the project planning stage and

implemented during the execution phase as part of the controls process. Periodic review of the guide's effectiveness will help refine it.

Besides increased safety and quality, another result of creating and implementing a triage program for submittals is greater agility in project management.

References:

- [1] "The Hyatt Regency Walkway Collapse," Wikipedia; [Hyatt Regency walkway collapse](#)
- [2] "Submittals (Construction)," Wikipedia; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Submittals_\(construction\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Submittals_(construction))