

IHS Standards Expert™

Data When and Where You Need It:
Burns & McDonnell Engineers Access Standards
in the Field in Minutes



The Source

for Critical Information and Insight™

Case Study

Business Benefits

Engineers bring up standards documents in the course of their workflow in minutes – even at project sites.

- Immediate access saves project time, supports safety and reduces risk.
- IStandards Expert immediately alerts the corporate library about updates.
- A comprehensive standards subscription, with one bill, simplifies management for the corporate librarian.

Customer Profile

From airports to refineries, power plants to water treatment facilities, the engineering and architectural firm Burns & McDonnell delivers planning, design and construction expertise to make clients successful.

Founded in 1898, the 100% employee-owned firm has more than 2,900 engineers, architects, construction experts, planners, estimators, economists, technicians and scientists representing virtually all design disciplines.

Business Challenge

With such a diverse mix of projects, Burns & McDonnell may be simultaneously working on a state-of-the-art wind power facility and a 50-year-old power plant. For that reason, the range of standards documents needed

numbers in the thousands. In the past year alone, engineers accessed more than 13,000 different standards.

At the company's headquarters in Kansas City, the corporate library maintains subscriptions to all relevant standards. Until several years ago, the library kept only paper copies. When they received standards, they sent a postcard back requesting updates. Then, they would get that same postcard telling them that a standard was updated, prompting librarians to order the new standards. Days later, standards were in engineers' hands.

“You have to consider how much an engineer’s time is worth. Instant access to standards from a power plant or bridge saves money. Everything we do is aimed at serving clients, so that helps us avoid delays, improve safety and reduce risk.”

— Gail Kammer, Corporate Librarian

Even when standards were updated, the firm had to keep the older versions for times when engineers and technicians needed the previous information, such as old building codes. The amount of space required, the lag time to receive paper copies, and changing times all motivated librarians to migrate to electronic standards.

“It’s surprising how often issues come up and engineers need standards at client sites,” said Gail Kammer, corporate librarian. “Every second they don’t have what they need in the field is a problem.”

Standards from a Single Source

Burns & McDonnell selected the IHS Standards Expert solution for electronic access to the full range of standards it requires. Standards Expert provides an interface that enables information users and managers to access the world’s most comprehensive databank of engineering standards. They can search and navigate through up-to-date standards – giving them access to current information quickly.

“IHS could meet our comprehensive need,” Kammer said. “I like the fact that everything is together in one spot. Our users don’t have to learn another system.”

The firm began with boiler codes and built its electronic library from there, in what Kammer calls a “revolution” from the way the firm handled standards previously. With the Standards Expert solution as the interface, staff members quickly search through the standards they need most: API Select; ASME Elevator Code; NFPA Data Pages; ASME BPVC Non-Nuclear; ASTM sections for metals, construction and plastics, IEEE – Power Network; MSS – Network; PFI Network; ASHRAE Network; AWWA Standards Network and ASME BPVC ADVANTAGE.

With the interface, staff can search for specific parts of standards and pull up documents directly on their desktops in minutes. Before, they might have waited hours or longer as the corporate library routed paper copies over.

Anywhere Access

Each user logs into Standards Expert on the desktop. That empowers engineers to bring up information in the course of their workflow, without waiting for a corporate librarian to provide documents.

“It’s right in the course of their work without interruption,” Kammer said. “You type in the number or a keyword and the standard comes up.”

The interface displays “My Subscriptions” down the left-hand column of the screen, providing quick navigation to those used most. Or, users can look through a table of contents to find others.

Instead of receiving a postcard, the library and, if desired, users receive email alerts as soon as new versions of standards are available.

Access from project sites enables engineers to get the answers they need on their laptops and handheld devices and move on. “You have to consider how much an engineer’s time is worth. Instant access to standards from a power plant or bridge saves money,” Kammer said. “Everything we do is aimed at serving clients, so that helps us avoid delays, improve safety and reduce risk.”

Always Up to Date

The IHS Standards Expert solution simplifies subscription management for Kammer. She and her team provide comprehensive resources to staff while enjoying just one bill for it all. Additionally, alerts about updates ensure that the company always has the most current documents on hand to support projects.

“I never have to worry whether standards are current,” she said. “I know they’re current. It’s very important to the work that’s done that these are up to date.”

Plus, the current collection of standards takes up considerably less space than the paper collection.

Next, Burns & McDonnell may expand its subscription to include older historical standards and more sections of ASTM to cover some of the newer “green” building practices. Adding those is a matter of a quick call to the company’s IHS representative.

“We have a great relationship with our IHS rep,” she added. “If it’s a big push, we can get standards within 24 hours.”



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