Project Monitoring: The “Eyes & Ears” of Construction

1st Edition
Introduction

A Project Monitor is key on projects incorporating national remediation and/or construction companies. The potential of large time and expense invoicing or extended production schedules is greatly reduced with the presence of a Project Monitor.

The importance of a Project Monitor is to keep the project progressing forward by:

- Assessing the loss
- Quickly navigating equipment and manpower
  - Ensuring the equipment and manpower are in accordance with the project at hand
  - Providing on-site, real time evaluations
- Recommending and monitoring fair and reasonable expenditures per client expectations
- Daily site presence for observations and reporting

Background

Project Monitoring (often compared to Clerk of the Works) is a time-honored tradition in the construction industry dating back to the 13th century when monks and priests took on the role of supervising works associated with the erection of religious facilities. In today’s role, the Project Monitor is much more than simply a Clerk of the Works, they are dedicated to the detailed inspections and documentation of material and workmanship throughout the remediation or building process. Unlike a Clerk of the Works, they are not simply counting items and “ticking and tying” field notes to invoicing.

Ensuring the value of investment, on behalf of the client, is paramount to the Project Monitor. Daily site presence is crucial. The Project Monitor routinely remains onsite for the duration of the project as the “eyes and ears” of a third party; reporting on the equipment, labor, materials, and workmanship. They will monitor progressions and delays, while reporting their findings to the client, as these factors impact the project’s budget and completion schedules significantly.

Role

The role of the Project Monitor, while not limited to these items, includes the following:

DAILY REPORTING DETAIL

1. Site conditions
   - Conditions (weather, temperature, precipitation, etc.) may cause a schedule interruption, depending on the project and task. As an example, strong wind conditions would affect...
the operation of a crane and subsequent lifts thereby delaying that day’s production and possibly the overall project.

2. Labor counts and varying trades (Fig. 1)

- Different projects require different labor and trade involvement; having enough workers onsite to complete the task is paramount and having too many workers can be counterproductive and add unnecessary expense.

- Daily onsite headcounts of each trade specialty and their designation are recorded. This information is important when discussing productivity and crew ratios, and will be of use during the invoice review.

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<th></th>
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<th>NIGHT SHIFT</th>
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<tr>
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Figure 1 – Daily Labor Report (excerpt)

3. Material deliveries

- As with equipment, each project will require materials and consumables. Having a record of material and consumable inventories, as well as deliveries, will assist the invoice review.

4. Equipment deliveries, removals and daily onsite count (Fig. 2)

- Projects of all sizes will require equipment and the expense of equipment typically begins the moment it arrives onsite. It is important to know what equipment, and how much of it, is onsite and in use. Having dehumidifiers, air movers, desiccants, generators, forklifts, or even a crane onsite and not in use is an opportunity for discussion and negotiation – no matter the size of the equipment or the project.

- Equipment counts, inventory, and usage are taken daily.
SITE OBSERVATIONS

The General Contractor is onsite overseeing and supervising all work related to reconstruction.

Per site observations and/or discussions with the foreman for Drywall Co., Drywall Co. is performing the following work:

1. Drywall Co. - working 7:00AM to 3:30PM installing insulation, drywall, and then taping, floating, and finishing installed drywall.


5. Drywall Co. - Drywall hanging, taping, floating and finishing in: Main Corridor North A, B and C, House West Corridor 1, 2, 3 & 4, Main Corridor South B and C, and Main Corridor East, 134, 142, 161, 179, 202, 224, 244, 348, 358, 368, 371, 379, 410A, 410D, 428, 430, 433, 457, 479, 482, 489, 506, 508, 517, 521, 524, 527, 532, and 541.

5. Daily site observations (Fig. 2)

   - Daily observations, per trade, are taken as a record of job progressions or interruptions depending on the situation.

   - These observations are available to the client.
6. Photo documentation of site progression (Fig. 3)

- Onsite photos of equipment, labor, and various other details, whether considered relevant or not at the time, are taken daily. Photos are an excellent indicator of project progressions or delays.
REVIEW OF CONTRACTOR RATE SHEETS

• A rate sheet is utilized by most contractors as a calculation of costs such as labor (daily, travel, overtime), vendor/subcontractor (daily, travel, overtime), equipment, small tools, consumables, etc. The rate sheets should be reviewed and negotiated for each project, including crew/supervision ratios and clarification of any vague or hidden fees.

• A discussion of concerns and agreed upon rates is vital as it will become the ‘agreed to’ at the end of project and invoice review.

MONITOR DAILY CONSUMABLES

• Knowing the daily consumable rate will assist with knowing a crucial element associated with the contractors ‘burn rate’, especially on a mitigation project.

FAMILIARIZATION WITH DRAWINGS AND WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS

• Reconstruction projects typically involve engineers and code compliance in design and materials. Being aware of the design details, building plans, installation methodologies, and code enhancements is a communication tool helpful for understanding the flow of the project and potential concerns as a project moves forward.

BEING PRIVY TO POTENTIAL SPECIFICATION DESIGN ISSUES, IN REAL TIME, BEFORE THEY AFFECT COST AND SCHEDULE

• If a product or ‘as built’ has to be modified or material revised due to unforeseen circumstances, these modifications or cost revisions will need to be addressed and communicated to the client for response in rapid succession prior to execution or project delay.

ADVISING THE CONTRACTOR BUT NEVER INSTRUCTING/DIRECTING THE CONTRACTOR

• Never give direction however, sometimes challenge the direction given.

• There are opportunities to work alongside the contractor. For example, clarifying what is considered loss related damage and repairs versus what would be considered an improvement.

ATTEND CONTRACTOR AND SUB-CONTRACTOR PRODUCTION MEETINGS

• This activity assists in the understanding of the contractor’s methodology and strategic approach in the repair or mitigation of a project. These meetings reveal trade challenges and contractor problem solving abilities while maintaining quality standards; this is a good source of project intelligence and daily reporting.
ATTEND CONTRACTOR AND INSURED/OWNER PRODUCTION MEETINGS

- The insured’s knowledge of the project progressions or delays is important information delivered by the contractor and observed by the Project Monitor. Often the Project Monitor is viewed by the insured as a representative of the adjuster, and as such relies on the Project Monitor for validation or clarification of the information provided by the contractor.

UPDATE PRODUCTION SCHEDULES

- As production begins, whether it be mitigation or construction, inevitably a schedule will be presented by the contractor. It is the Project Monitor’s responsibility to be aware, and keep their client aware, of schedule fluctuations utilizing realistic projections for the remaining work.

AUDIT CONTRACTOR INVOICES

- Contractor invoices for payment, on larger projects, are typically progressive. ‘Agreed to’ rates on labor, equipment, materials, consumables, etc., will now be implemented.

- The Project Monitor has first-hand knowledge and reporting of daily site activity, which will offer insight into verification of contractor invoicing.

ADDRESS UNRESOLVED CONCERNS AFFECTING PROJECT COMPLETION

- When a project is approaching completion and the pant of heavy construction or catastrophic mitigation has subsided, so begins the detail of cleaning and finalizing punch lists. This is the time for the Project Monitor to stay extra vigilant as these are the details that can keep a job from timely completion.

- The Project Monitor pushes the schedule and all aspects of the project to the end.

Summary

Today’s Project Monitor provides an independent assessment of the project at hand with the experience, knowledge, and understanding of most building processes. Whatever the project, from mitigating a water loss to the nuances of building a multi-level structure; the Project Monitor builds a strong working rapport with the construction and design teams to become a true liaison between the teams performing the tasks and the expectations of the client. This is accomplished through the following:

- Daily reports
- Review of contractor rate sheets
- Monitoring daily contractor consumables
• Familiarization with drawings and written instructions
• Highlighting potential specification design issues before they affect construction
• Advising the contractor but never instructing/directing the contractor
• Attending contractor and sub-contractor production meetings
• Attending contractor and insured production meetings
• Updating production schedules
• Auditing contractor invoices
• Addressing unresolved concerns affecting project completion

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