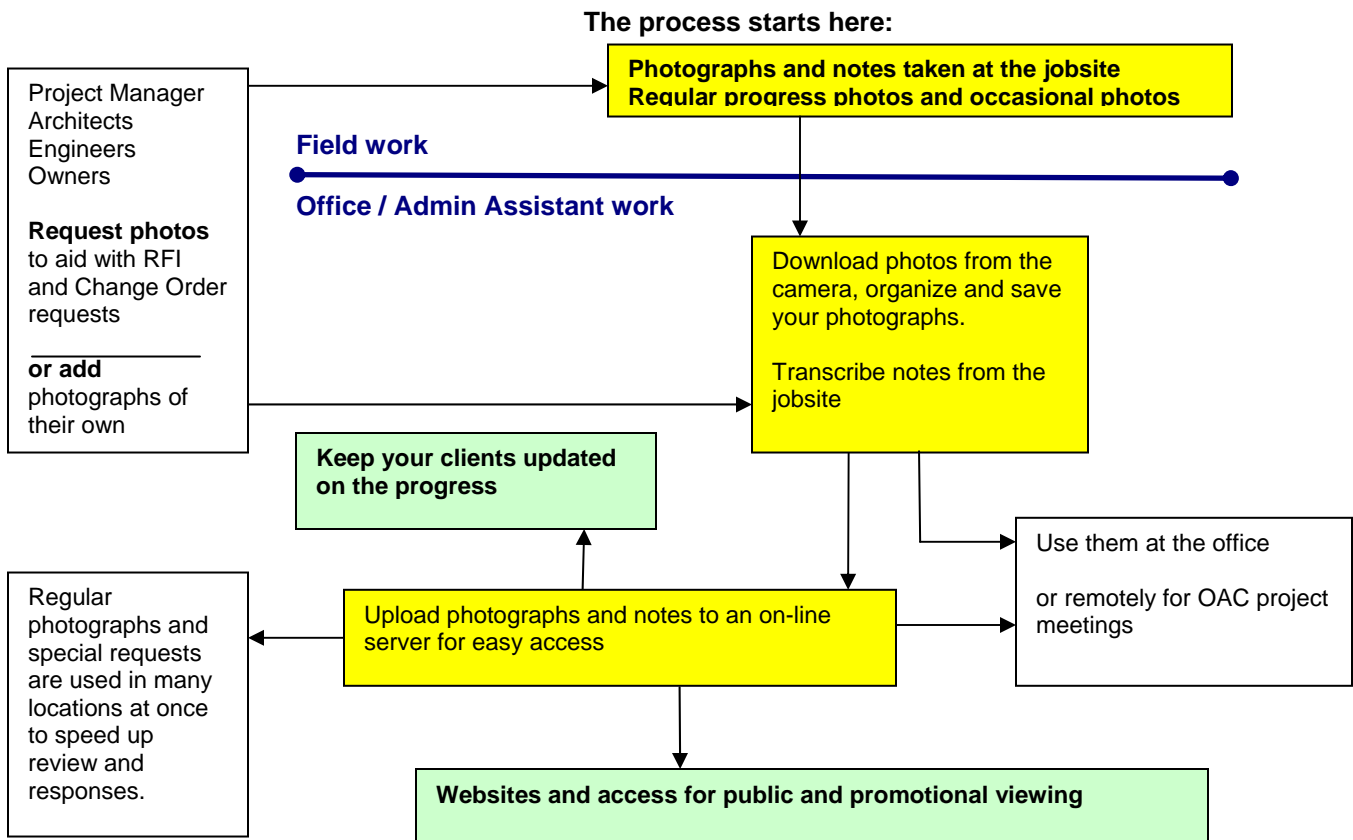


PHOTO-DOCUMENTATION FOR GENERAL CONTRACTORS

Simply put, photo-documentation is just an organized way to take and use your project photographs.

Virtually all general contractors take some photographs on their jobsites. Not all of them take the time to properly organize and save their photos. Even fewer have an easy way to share them with everyone on the project team. This process has been around for a while but has really taken off with the introduction of digital cameras. The better, cheaper, and smaller they got the more photographs were likely to be taken on the job site.

What most don't realize is just how simple of a process that photo-documentation really is. This is a basic diagram of photo-documentation workflow.



The yellow boxes are the photo-documentation process, everything else is just some of what you can do with it.

There are only 4 simple rules to a true photo-documentation program

1. Take photographs consistently and at regular intervals, if you don't take them now you can't go back and get them later
2. ALWAYS take notes describing each and every photograph
3. Organize and save photographs soon after they are taken
4. Share photographs and notes with the project team

What makes the General Contractor well suited for photo-documentation:

Resources

To photo-document a project you must know construction and to photo-document well you must be involved on the project. The general contractor has the persons best qualified for this work.

Project Knowledge

The GC is the party most closely tied to all aspects of the project. You have reviewed the project just to make your bid. You are most likely responsible for the schedule and any changes to the schedule and you are also responsible for all of the sub-contractor's progress.

Since the GC knows the plans, specs and schedules of the entire project they possess the *project knowledge* and are the first to know about any changes during the project.

Team Interactions

The GC is directly connected to everyone involved with the project. The GC is the only party that interacts with the owner, architects, design engineers, construction management, inspectors, sub-contractors and any other third party persons whether hired by the GC or the owner.

The General Contractor gains the most benefit from photo-documentation:

- If you need to meet a construction photography specification you will be able to do it yourself and save a lot of money.
- As a marketing advantage, it will give you an edge over the competition. By offering to share your progress photos with the client it will show that you have confidence in your work and a commitment to quality.
- When photographing your project on a regular schedule it lets the subs know that everything is being looked at and documented. This tends to produce a better, on-time project. It also gives you back-up visual documentation for any sub-contractor related issues.
- As a visual communication tool photographs can be used to support RFI's and Change Orders. They can be made accessible to the Architects and Engineers direct from the jobsite. This can reduce turn-around time and costly site visits. Photographs used to resolve an issue makes an excellent record of these decisions and their results.
- Taking photographs yourself means that you never have to deal with copyrights held by a photographer. You are free to share photographs, use in training and use for marketing.
- Having such a detailed visual record will help with anything that may come up during the warranty period, for both the GC and the subs.

Cost impact to setup and run a photo-documentation program:

You probably already have the necessary items, you just need a Photo-Documentation program

	HAVE ONE	NEED ONE
First setup (one-time costs)		
Digital Camera and Memory card	<input type="checkbox"/> have one \$0	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150 and up
Computer (jobsite or office)	<input type="checkbox"/> have one \$0	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 and up
Operational costs		
Knowledgeable person*	1-4 hrs/week, field time + 2 hrs office time	
On-line Internet server	<input type="checkbox"/> have one \$0	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15/mo & up

*Time varies greatly by project size and complexity and desired level of photo-documentation. 1-4 hours / week field time reflects basic level photography on a project of 20,000 – 40,000 sq. ft.

Basic photo-documentation is about as easy as it gets. If you want to take your project photographs to the next level I suggest that you start with the photos you already take, add the descriptive note for each one (when the photo is taken) and make sure it is properly saved and organized. Use this as a base level program and build up from there, the next step is to introduce a schedule and begin taking regular progress photos.

It is hard to understand the incredible benefits provided by photo-documentation until you really, really need some photographs from the past. When done properly photo-documentation will help you manage your projects. In its best form a proper photo-document will help you if a problem goes to litigation and may even prevent a problem from going that far.

Learn what you can about photo-documentation but most importantly start doing it, even at its most basic level you will see the benefits. CPD provides a training program at www.cpdphotos.com as a great starting platform. Anyone can do this and I believe that everyone should.

Complete photo-documentation information at www.cpdphotos.com
Click on the CPD “The Program” button.