

**USING THE NATSPEC CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM TO ORGANISE INFORMATION**

**INTRODUCTION**

The NATSPEC National classification system was designed for organising the content of specifications. However, it is also useful for organising building product and technical information needed during design and construction processes.

It can be used to organise:

- Internet Bookmarks or Favourites folders for links to webpages.
- Computer folders for digital files.
- BIM object libraries.
- Libraries of printed documents.

Building product and technical information is collected to inform design decisions and as reference material during the documentation of a project. The advantage of using the NATSPEC classification system for organising this information is that it provides a common thread for linking design and documentation workflows. Filing information by the NATSPEC classification system from the outset saves having to repeatedly reorganise or reformat it. Apart from reducing the amount of work involved, it reduces the risk of errors and omissions.

**THE NATSPEC NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

Some construction classification systems are designed specifically for organising information on building products including Omniclass Table 22, Uniclass Table L and SifB Tables 1 - 3. None are currently formally supported or widely used across the Australian construction industry.

Being purpose-designed, these systems are fine grained, i.e. locations are included in the system for numerous individual products. The NATSPEC classification system has a coarser grain because it groups items under broader headings. However, this is generally adequate for most practitioners' practical purposes.

The classification system follows a hierarchical structure (from general to more specific) to classify information related to construction work. For example:

Level	Level name	Example	
1	Workgroup	03	Structure
2	Subgroup	031	Concrete
3	Worksection	0316	Precast concrete

**NATSPEC CLASSIFICATION TOOLS**

NATSPEC provides a number of tools based on the NATSPEC National classification system to make the process of organising and filing information easier. The greatest benefits accrue when the tools are used together. See **Figure 1**. The value of the tools can be multiplied if used in conjunction with a NATSPEC-based keynoting system which assists the coordination of specifications and drawings. The NATSPEC Keynote Framework file can also be downloaded from the location noted in the sidebar.

**Digital filing folders**

Use the folders in the downloadable zip file to organise files on your computer. When loaded into Windows Explorer or Mac Finder they can be used to store files sent to you or that you have downloaded from the web. These include technical articles, product data sheets, CAD files and BIM object files. Setting up separate sets with names like 'Products', 'Technical Information', 'Object Library' for each type of information will make information retrieval easier.

Likewise, when loaded into the Bookmarks or Favorites file of your internet browser, the folders provide a convenient way of organising web addresses by the same system.

**Label templates for physical binders**

Most offices have a collection of printed trade or technical literature. Without a filing system this material can quickly become disorganised, making it difficult to find items when needed. To assist the filing process NATSPEC provides label template files for printing ready-made labels for binders.

They come in 2 types:

- Adhesive: For direct application.
- Non-adhesive: For insertion into clear plastic holders.

Each type comes in 2 sizes:

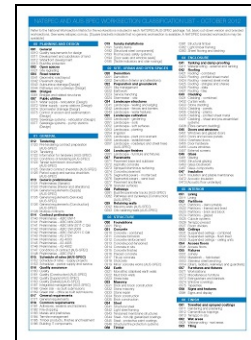
- Narrow: For the spines of narrow ring binders.
- Wide: For lever-arch files, etc.

The adhesive label templates are preconfigured for Avery sheet labels for laser and inkjet printers. The product codes of the Avery sheet labels required are included in the instructions on the website.

**Downloadable tools**

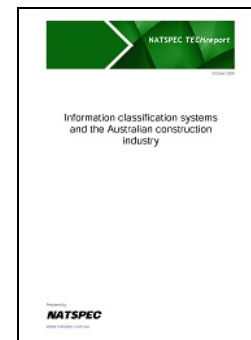
The tools described in this TECHnote and instructions for their use can be downloaded from [www.natspec.com.au](http://www.natspec.com.au). Click on the BIM logo and find them under the **Tools** menu on the page that appears.

**Relevant documents**



*National classification system.*

This document summarises the classification system. It can be used as an index to your office library.



*NATSPEC TECHreport Information classification systems and the Australian construction industry.*

A detailed study of international classification systems.

Download the current editions at [www.natspec.com.au](http://www.natspec.com.au).

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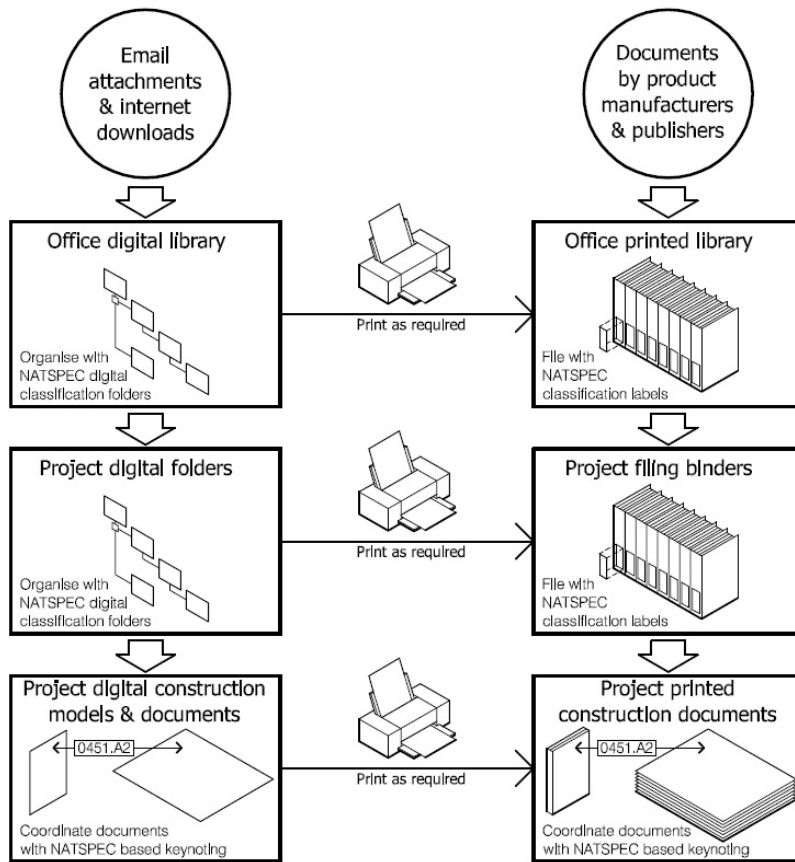


Figure 1. Linking information with the NATSPEC classification system

**USING THE CLASSIFICATION TOOLS**

**Managing product and technical information in your office**

Although product and technical information can be collected and organised by everyone in an organisation, even small organisations usually benefit from having this process managed on their behalf by one person, e.g. a librarian. Filing information according to the classification system as you make design decisions makes it easier to progressively build the specification during documentation of the project. This is preferable to leaving specification writing to the end of the documentation phase, which involves reviewing earlier notes (if there are any) and increases the risk of omissions.

**Filing manufacturers' product catalogues**

This TECHnote is generally applicable to filing individual documents and files. Manufacturers' product catalogues may require a different approach. The most practical approach is probably to file all manufacturers' catalogues separately from the binders labelled with classification numbers and arrange their names alphabetically. This dual system makes updating catalogues easier but it relies on library users being familiar with the products of each manufacturer. They can be helped to find things by:

- Fixing a label to the catalogue that displays classification numbers for all products it contains. List in numerical order.
- Including a page at the beginning of each numbered binder that cross references catalogues containing products falling under that classification number.

Other approaches to filing manufacturers' catalogues include:

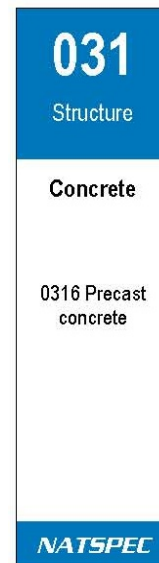
- If all the catalogue content falls under the same classification number, label it with the number and place it on the shelf in numerical order.
- If the content falls under a number of different classifications, redistribute it to binders labelled with the appropriate NATSPEC classification number.

Whatever approach you adopt, it should be applied consistently.

Any information that does not include a publication date should be date-stamped to assist updating procedures.

**Format of folders and labels**

The downloadable digital folders are organised by Workgroup and Subgroup only. Folders do not extend to Worksection level but Worksection folders can be added to Subgroup folders as needed. For similar reasons, labels show only 3 digit Subgroup numbers.



Typical binder label showing, from top to bottom:

- Subgroup number.
- Workgroup name.
- Subgroup name.
- A blank cell that can be edited as required. A worksection number and name (0316 *Precast concrete*) has been added in this example.
- NATSPEC logo.