

# CHANGES IN ALTA SURVEY STANDARDS 2011 TO 2016

Specifications for ALTA Land Title Surveys were initially adopted in 1962 and have been revised 8 times since. Previously co-written with the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping (ACSM) which merged with the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS), they are now known as ALTA/NSPS Land Title Surveys as of the 2016 revision. There are also several other changes in the standards. Though none of them are major, some of them will be noticeable and will require mild adapting.

- Previously the fine print required that all public records were to be provided to the surveyor by the insurer, including the adjacent descriptions. While that requirement is still in place, there is now an exception that if they are not provided, the surveyor shall obtain the documents necessary to satisfy statutory requirements (Section 4).
- Utility location requirements have changed. Location of observed utility evidence was formerly Table A item 11(a) but is now a standard requirement (Section 5.E.iii & iv). Table A item 11 is now a hybrid of the 811 “one call”, external research, and possibly third party investigation and locate service. The actual scope of service should be discussed if item 11 is specified in the future such that expectations and needs are met, and it may be realized that no item 11 is needed.
- New verbiage is included regarding legal descriptions. Any new description should state that the new description describes the same real estate as the record description or note how it differs. Another new requirement is to identify and include the point of beginning, the remote point of beginning or point of commencement as identified in the record description (and new description if one is prepared). This should resolve the confusion of when a surveyor tries to use a different “tie point” or “point of reference” than the record description uses, by eliminating that option (Section 6.b.ii & iii).
- Distances are now specified to be “ground distances”. This does not mean slope distances or distances measured along the surface (such to include ditches, ground profiles, etc.) but to distinguish from “grid distances” as many surveyors use on pre-construction surveys to aid in using GPS equipment. Depending on where a piece of property is located within the respective grid, the use of “grid distances” may distort stated or surveyed distances by much more than accepted tolerances (Section 6.B.iii).
- To aid in clarity, the boundary shall be drawn in a manner that distinguishes it from other lines on the plat. Vacant property is to be noted “no buildings observed”. Any negotiated Table A items (#21) shall be explained. The survey shall now be called an “ALTA/NSPS Land Title Survey” (Section 6.D. ii).
- Zoning to be shown on the survey must now come from a zoning report to be provided to the surveyor. The surveyor is no longer required nor responsible to research and certify zoning information. This does not prevent surveyors from preparing zoning reports under separate contract. This is intended to eliminate the option of a cursory look at a county/city GIS website and ordinance, and reporting information that may be incorrect due to variances, zoning conditions, etc. that are only discoverable through proper zoning research (Table A item 6)
- Other less significant Table A changes include: Item 18 no longer includes evidence of a landfill, as ESA Phase 1 reports have become universal in addressing these concerns; Item 18 is now the old Item 19 which is wetlands, which now requires a field delineation by a qualified specialist. It is clarified that Item 20 does not need to state the amount of insurance on the plat. Item 21 is a blank, to be used to specify unique survey requirements to be “negotiated” with the surveyor.

The official 2016 ALTA/NSPS standards, along with a “red line” version that shows all changes from the 2011 standards in standard “strike through and underscore” format are available at our website [www.chastainassociates.com](http://www.chastainassociates.com) on the ALTA Survey page.

