

Assessment of Contract Time Suspensions Issued by the Department of Public Works and Highways–Metro Manila 3rd District Engineering Office

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the assessment of contract time suspensions issued by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) – Metro Manila 3rd District Engineering Office. It aims to analyze the reasons, frequency, and impacts of these suspensions on project timelines, cost efficiency, and overall service delivery. Using a descriptive research design, the study gathered data from official project records, reports, and interviews with key personnel. The findings highlight common causes of suspensions, such as unfavorable weather conditions, right-of-way issues, and delays in material supply. The analysis further explores how these interruptions affect project completion, contractor performance, and public service outcomes. By identifying patterns and challenges, the study provides insights into the efficiency of project management practices within the district office. Recommendations are also presented to improve monitoring, coordination, and policy enforcement. Ultimately, the research underscores the importance of timely and well-managed infrastructure projects in ensuring public trust and sustainable development.

Keywords: *Contract Time Suspension, DPWH, Project Management, Infrastructure Development, Metro Manila 3rd District Engineering Office, Construction Delays, Public Works*

INTRODUCTION

The Metro Manila 3rd District Engineering Office (MM3DEO) is situated at APDC-BAI Compound, R. Valenzuela Extension, Marulas, Valenzuela City. The territorial jurisdictions of the District Office are the cities of Caloocan and Valenzuela. The pertinent facts and figures about the administrative components of MM3DEO are indicated below as follows:

Table 1
Facts and Figures of the Administrative Components of MM3DEO

City	Land Area (sq.km.)	No. of Barangays	Population	Population Density (Persons/sq.km.)
Valenzuela	47.02	33	714,978	15,206
Caloocan	53.33	188	1,661,584	31,157
TOTAL	100.35	221	2,376,562	

The Local Government Units are headed by Mayor Dale G. Malapitan of Caloocan City and Mayor Weslie T. Gatchalian of Valenzuela City. The Congressional Districts are represented by: Congressman Oscar G. Malapitan (Caloocan – 1st District); Congressman Edgar R. Erice (Caloocan – 2nd District); Congressman Dean Asistio (Caloocan – 3rd District); Congressman Kenneth T. Gatchalian (Valenzuela – 1st District); and Congressman Gerald Galang (Valenzuela – 2nd District).

At present, the Metro Manila 3rd District Engineering Office is operating as second class district with an allocation of sixty-eight (68) budgetary positions, one hundred eighty-five (185) Job Orders, and Eighty (80) Roadside Maintenance Workers.

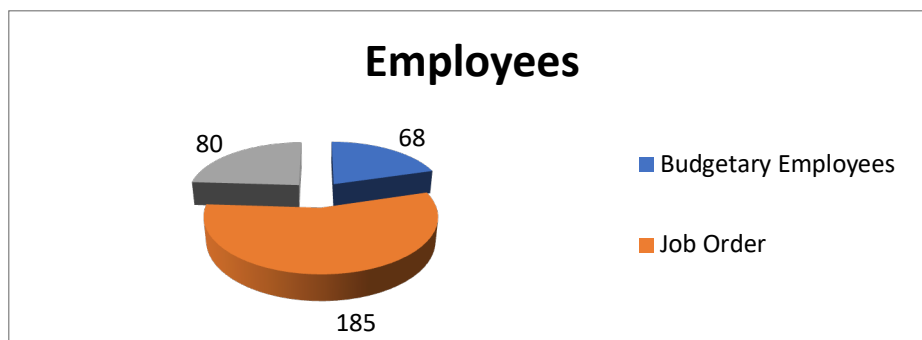


Figure 1. Number of Employees

Included in the responsibilities of the MM3DEO is the maintenance of 35 national roads with an aggregate length of 102.831 kms. and 20 bridges, which are located in various parts of Caloocan City and Valenzuela City. District Engineer Ruel V. Umali and Assistant District Engineer Andres C. Macaalay, Jr, head the District Office. Also, the MM3DEO is composed of six (6) sections and two (2) units as shown below:

Section/Unit	Section Chief/Unit Head
Administrative Section	Ms. Ma. Rossini D. Godalla
Construction Section	Engr. Elizabeth R. Talde
Finance Section	Ms. Elaine F. Cantos, CPA
Maintenance Section	Engr. Rejeane G. Mangulabnan
Planning and Design Section	Engr. Carlo Luiz D. Martin
Materials Quality Assurance Section	Engr. Arthur P. Ocaña
BAC Unit	Engr. Jessel G. Torres-Gatchalian
Supply Unit	Mr. Tirso F. Cruz

The Objective of this Project is to assess the effectiveness of the Contract Time Suspension through the issued Contract Time Suspensions by the DPWH – MM3DEO, guided by the Department Order No. 39, Series of 2024, Approval of Work Suspension Order, Work Resumption Order, and Contract Time Extension for Civil Works Projects.

This project will be significant to the agency as it may help minimize the contributing factors to project delays, which can provide great relief to the community, especially when implementing road projects.

I. Practicum Program

The practicum schedule was 8:00AM to 5:00PM, Monday-Friday. The practicum was conducted in both the office and construction fields. The training involves monitoring, observing, and inspecting the implemented 2024 locally funded projects of DPWH-MM3DEO. Problems encountered were that most of the project engineers, project inspectors, and resident engineers were not available for some discussions most of the time.

The MM3DEO has implemented Two Hundred Eighty-Three (283) 2024 locally funded projects as of December 31, 2024. In this practicum, it was observed that there are many lapses in the Implementing Office due to many factors like political issues and a lack of technical personnel. Additionally, the author learned that a Project Engineer, a Project Inspector, and Resident Engineers from both the

Implementing Office and the Contractor should be fully knowledgeable about the scope of work of the projects. The author also learned that they must all focus and be hands-on in implementing/supervising the projects designated to them.

The D.O. No. 39, Series of 2024 which serves as guide for the issuance of contract time suspension was released last March 18, 2024 and has been implemented in MM3DEO on the same date. Relative hereto, the acceptable reasons for the issuance of Contract Time Suspensions were as follows:

- Due to Rainy/Unworkable Days, the prosecution of the works at the site is considered unfavorable.
- Due to the Delay in the payment of the Contractor's Claim for Progress Billing/s.
- Due to the Road Right-of-Way Problem
- Due to the Peace and Order Condition
- Due to Inaccessibility to the Project
- Due to the Obstruction
- Due to the Failure of the Government to provide the necessary construction plans and/or drawings
- Due to the unavailability of construction materials
- Due to the effect of Force Majeure
- Due to the absence of an MMDA Permit/Clearance for Road Repair/Excavation/Traffic Clearance
- Due to the absence of the LGU Permit/Clearance/Homeowners Association Clearance/Permit
- Due to DENR Clearance/Permit to cut/remove trees within the Road-Right-of-Way
- Delayed Delivery of Imported Materials due to truck ban and/or port congestion

It was found that in the Pre-Construction Phase, it was observed that the needed permits, like the DENR Permit, demolition permit, MMDA Permit/clearance, LGU Permit, etc., were not considered, as it became a reason for contract time suspension. The author also found that weather issues were not taken into account in the computation of project duration.

During stake-out/mobilization, most of the plans were not fit to the actual field condition, which leads to change orders/variation orders and contributes to project delays.

During the Construction Phase, it was found that a Project Engineer supervises more than forty (40) Projects, whereas a Project Engineer III is limited to implementing a maximum of fifteen (15) projects simultaneously, per D.O. No. 115, Series of 2018, Revised Guidelines on Accredited and Assignment of DPWH Project Engineers and Inspectors (Annex B) [3]. The district has only eleven (11) Project Engineers. It consists of one (1) Project Engineer III, six (6) Project Engineer I, and four (4) Junior Project Engineer.

Also, the District has only four (4) Materials Engineer, who handles all the projects of the MM3DEO. Most of the Contractors' engineers also handle numerous projects. The majority handles more than five (5) projects, wherein a Contractor must have one (1) Project Engineer per project.

From these observations, the author suggests that one must be versatile in doing this job, as political issues intervene in this line of work. The agency resolves project delays by assisting contractors in expediting their construction operations. Doubling their effort in monitoring and supervising the numerous projects must always be practiced.

II. Practicum Project

The Practicum Project aims to assess the reasons behind the numerous contract time suspensions issued for 2024 locally funded projects.

The Metro Manila 3rd District Engineering Office (MM3DEO) has implemented Two Hundred Eighty-Three (283) 2024 locally funded projects as of December 31, 2024. One hundred seventy-six (176) of

them, or 62.20% of the 2024 locally funded projects, have an approved Contract Time Suspension. The majority of the reasons used per Department Order No. 39, Series of 2024 were due to Rainy/Unworkable Days, Road Right-of-Way Problems, obstructions, pending issuance of permit from the MMDA, LGU, and DENR.

Table 2
Reasons for Contract Time Suspensions Issued by the MM3DEO

Reasons	Quantity	Percentage
Rainy/Unworkable Days	3	1.92%
Delay in the payment of Contractor's Claim for Progress Billing	0	0.00%
Road Right-of-Way Problem	44	25.00%
Peace and Order Condition	0	0.00%
Inaccessibility to Project	0	0.00%
Obstruction	27	15.38%
Failure of the Government to provide necessary construction plans and/or drawings	0	0.00%
non-availability of construction materials	0	0.00%
Effect of Force Majeure	0	0.00%
MMDA Permit/Clearance	14	7.69%
LGU Permit/Clearance/Homeowners Association Clearance/Permit	60	34.09%
DENR Clearance/Permit	27	15.38%
Delayed delivery of Imported Materials	0	0.00%
TOTAL	176	

By analyzing the collected data, it was revealed that the top reason contractors cited for the issuance of contract time suspensions was the pending issuance of the LGU permit, clearance, or homeowners association clearance. Hence, as observed, some contractors collude with the Barangay Captains to obtain an antedated Barangay Clearance for use in their contract time suspensions.

There are inner factors/deeper reasons that contribute to project delays, which are beyond the D.O. No. 39, Series of 2024. From this conclusion, the author has conducted a survey of twenty (20) respondents, involving ten (10) MM3DEO technical personnel and ten (10) MM3DEO contractors’ representatives, regarding project delays. The author has established ten (10) factors of project delays, which the respondents will rank from 1-10. A rate of 1 will be given for the top reason why a project delays, and 10 will be given for the least factor. These factors were as follows:

- Change order
- Financial Difficulties
- Inadequate contractor experience
- Inadequate project duration
- Inadequate supervision of the contractor
- Poor Contractor’s Performance
- Poor site management/supervision
- Securing Permits
- Shortage of manpower
- Unforeseen site condition

Shown below is the result of the conducted survey:

Table 3
Result of Conducted Survey

Reasons	Rank	Rate
Monetary Problems	1	0.15
Poor Contractor's Performance	2	0.24
Lack of manpower	3	0.28
Poor Site administration/supervision	4	0.39
Inadequate Project Duration	5	0.49
Securing of Permits	6	0.61
Change Order/Variation Order	7	0.68
Inadequate supervision to contractor	8	0.83
Inadequate Contractor Knowledge	9	0.92
Unanticipated site circumstance	10	0.94

As for the result, the financial difficulties ranked as no. 1 for the reason that, most of the contractors get numerous projects even if they do not foresee their financial stability. For assessment, the author has observed and compared project supervised by the experienced Project Engineer and project supervised by the young equipped Provisional Project Engineer.

Per comparison, the project handled by the Project Engineer was most likely behind the schedule while the project handled by the Provisional Project Engineers were close to its projected schedule. Some factors established where the Provisional Project Engineer was into documents. The Provisional Project Engineer was able to monitor the project and warn the contractor through notices and letters. Also, since the Provisional Project Engineer was new in handling projects, the relationship or connection between the agency and contractor were guided by legal matters and procedures.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the Practicum Program, it was assessed that issuance of a contract time suspension became a "for compliance" document only. Some issued Contract Time Suspensions were given just to compromise the needs of the contractor and save them from blacklisting as a consequence of negative slippages. The D.O. No. 39, Series of 2024, is effective if it is strictly implemented. This Department Order will be effective if no connivances intervene.

As I gathered all the data and information, it is recommended for the agency to:

- Process all the permits and clearances needed during the Pre-Construction Phase.
- Strongly Implement the Department Order No. 193, Series of 2016, Administrative Action on Contracts with Negative Slippage in Accordance with the Revised IRR of R.A. 9184.
- Shuffle personnel to prevent collusion between contractors and personnel.
- Hire project-based engineers to monitor the projects implemented by the district.
- Consider weather conditions when computing project duration.

The issuance of Contract Time Suspensions is helpful in the implementation of the projects if it is used for a real and justifiable reason. It would be nonsense to implement if it were only used to tolerate the contractors' poor actions.

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