

October 2026 · Overview edition

The SHIELD Framework.

The security certification for buildings. How SHIELD works, what it measures, and how to get certified.

4

Zones

23

Sections

7

Control areas

3

Certification levels

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About this overview

This overview explains how the SHIELD framework is built and lists every section a building is assessed on. Sample requirements are written out at all three levels, so you can see how criteria build from SHIELD I to SHIELD III.

SHIELD is developed by the Secure Building Council, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, with volunteer practitioners from across the building and security industries. It reflects SHIELD Certification V1. Requirements are reviewed by the SBC Technical Committee and may be updated between editions.

SHIELD gives your building a recognized security level, so you can prove your security is reasonable before anyone has to ask.

LEED proves a building is sustainable. SHIELD proves it protects the people and the business inside.

SHIELD focuses on physical building security: the site, the building and every space inside it, from the property line inward. It is technology neutral and outcome based. It scores what a measure achieves, not which product delivers it. SHIELD is a security certification. Life safety and code egress stay with building codes, and no SHIELD measure may block a code-compliant exit.

WHAT SHIELD HELPS PROTECT

People

Protect occupants, staff and visitors, and meet your duty of care.

Property and goods

Reduce theft, including package and cargo theft at docks, mail rooms and back-of-house areas.

Operations

Run security more efficiently, from deliveries and visitor flow to incident response.

Liability

Show, with documented evidence, that your security decisions were reasonable.

BUILT FOR

Building owners and operators, developers, property managers, architects, engineers, security consultants and integrators, and everyone else who makes a security decision about a building.

Every space. Seven checks. Three levels.

SHIELD follows the building from the property line inward. Each place in and around the building is a section. Each section is checked across the same seven control areas, and every check is written at three levels.

23

Sections

Places in and around the building, grouped in four zones.

×

7

Control areas

What is checked in each place, from wayfinding to intrusion detection.

×

3

Levels

SHIELD I, II and III. Each level builds on the one below.

CERTIFICATION LEVELS



BASELINE

SHIELD I

Design, signage, procedures and core physical controls any well-run building can provide.



ENHANCED

SHIELD II

Everything in I, plus electronic access control, monitored alarms and cameras at defined image quality.



COMPREHENSIVE

SHIELD III

Everything in II, plus layered, integrated systems, central monitoring, analytics and measured lighting.



How a level is earned. A building earns a level when every requirement at that level and below is met or does not apply. Certification is valid for 3 years.

How each requirement is written

Every requirement follows the same structure. This example comes from Section 1, Property Line and Yards.

PROPERTY LINE AND YARDS · 1.2

Surveillance

SHIELD I

Site layout and low landscaping, with shrubs no taller than 3 ft, keep clear sightlines into, across and from inside the site.

SHIELD II

SHIELD I, plus enhanced lighting after dark so the site stays visible.

SHIELD III

Tamper-resistant exterior cameras cover areas with limited lighting at Identification-level imagery (at least 250 px/m), with infrared or low-light capability.

How a SAP verifies it: site walk and photos from the observer position, current site plans, and camera specifications.

1 Section

The place in or around the building the requirement belongs to.

2 Control area

One of the seven things checked in every section.

3 Levels

What SHIELD I, II and III look like for this requirement. Higher levels build on lower ones.

4 Verification

Checked on a site walk, by testing doors and devices, from current plans, from documents, and with building staff.

A requirement does not apply when the space does not exist in the building, for example a building with no underground parking or no loading dock. A requirement the building cannot physically meet is scored as not met, with the constraint recorded in the assessment.

Cameras are specified by image quality at the target, not by megapixels or brand. Measured lighting levels apply at SHIELD III only.

From the property line inward

A building is assessed place by place, from the street to the rooms that keep it running. Each section is checked across all seven control areas.

23

sections · 4 zones

1 Site and parking 5

Outside the building: the property line and every place people park.

- Property Line and Yards
- Connected Parking Structure
- Underground Parking
- Stand Alone Parking Deck
- Surface Parking Lot

2 Building perimeter and entries 5

The building shell and every way in.

- Building Perimeter
- Exterior Loading Dock
- Main Entrance Doorway
- Secondary Exterior Doorways and Exit-Only Doors
- Vestibule with Exterior and Interior Doorways

3 Shared interior 7

Spaces all occupants and visitors move through.

- Lobby
- Interior Hallways and Corridors
- Retail / Restaurant Space
- Interior Loading Dock Area
- Interior Courtyard Spaces
- Elevator
- Stairs

4 Tenant and critical spaces 6

Occupied floors and the rooms that keep the building running.

- Single Tenant Floors
- Multi-Tenant Floors
- Shared Bathrooms
- Mail Facility
- Information Technology Infrastructure Rooms
- HVAC / Generator / Mechanical Rooms

The same seven checks in every space

Every section is assessed across the same control areas, so owners, designers and assessors read each space the same way.



Wayfinding

Signs and cues that direct people and mark restricted areas.



Surveillance

Sightlines and cameras, with cameras specified by image quality at the target.



Lighting

Visibility for people and cameras. Measured light levels apply at SHIELD III.



Access control

Who can enter where, and when.



Design

Landscaping and floor plans that remove hiding places, based on CPTED principles.



Communications

Calling for help, and security messaging such as lockdown and shelter in place.



Intrusion detection

Alarms on doors and openings, and the response to them.



Applied where it matters

Some control areas carry no requirement in some spaces or levels. Higher levels add to lower ones.



Design is assessed on plans and on site. Floor plan criteria are checked against current scaled plans and a site walk, with photos taken from where people normally stand.

Three requirements, three zones.

Three levels of performance for each, and how an assessor checks them.

ZONE 2 · BUILDING PERIMETER AND ENTRIES

EXTERIOR LOADING DOCK · ACCESS CONTROL

Dock access

SHIELD I

The dock is a marked, restricted service area, separate from public circulation, with clearly identified vehicle and pedestrian entry points.

SHIELD II

Entry points cut to the minimum, with gates, barrier arms or controlled pedestrian access, and dock access restricted outside delivery windows.

SHIELD III

Layered control from site entry to service drive to dock apron, with credentialed or monitored gates and separate access for deliveries, staff and after hours.

How a SAP verifies it: site walk, gate and reader tests, site plans, access schedules.

ZONE 3 · SHARED INTERIOR

LOBBY · ACCESS CONTROL

Lobby access

SHIELD I

Visitors sign in or wear a visible badge. Doors from the lobby to tenant and back-of-house areas are locked by default.

SHIELD II

Electronic access control (badge, fob or PIN) on doors leading out of the lobby, with door-held-open and forced-entry alerts.

SHIELD III

Layered access: vestibule, then lobby, then a controlled interior checkpoint.

How a SAP verifies it: observation, door tests, visitor procedure, staff interview.

ZONE 4 · TENANT AND CRITICAL SPACES

MAIL FACILITY · DESIGN

Mail and package areas

SHIELD I

Open sightlines from the entry and work areas, no concealed areas, reached from public space only at its counter. Waiting packages are behind a locked door or in view of staff.

SHIELD II

All mail and packages go through reception or a mail room, never straight to tenants. Carrier drop-off and occupant pickup are separate points, both in view of staff.

SHIELD III

A mail screening area away from critical assets and crowds, with ventilation that can be isolated. The package room has no wall, window or door facing public space.

How a SAP verifies it: current floor plans, site walk, photos from the staff position.

From registration to plaque.

Who does what at each step: the owner registers and chooses a SAP, the SAP assesses the building, and SBC awards the level.

1

Register OWNER

Register the building with its type, size, location and target level.

2

Choose a SAP OWNER

Pick an independent SHIELD Accredited Professional from the directory, or ask SBC to connect you with one.

3

Assessment SAP

The SAP assesses every section that applies, across all seven control areas, on the SHIELD assessment platform or with the manual assessment form.

4

Review SBC

The submission goes through an automated first review, then SBC makes the final decision.

5

Certified SBC

The building receives its SHIELD level, certificate, plaque and a listing in the SHIELD registry.

3 years

Certification is valid for 3 years from the date it is awarded.

Any building

New construction, major renovations and buildings in operation.

Independent

Assessments are carried out by SAPs, not by SBC.

A building is assessed against the version of SHIELD in force on the date it registers. Recertification uses the version in force at that time. Assessors confirm in writing that everything they submit is accurate, and SBC may audit any assessment.

See the gaps. Plan the fixes. Find solutions.

The SHIELD platform turns an assessment into a clear plan: where the building falls short, what to do about it, what it may cost, and who can help.

Assessment report

1.2 Surveillance
Property Line and Yards

NOT MET

7.5 Access control
Exterior Loading Dock

NOT MET

8.5 Design · vehicle standoff
Main Entrance Doorway

NOT MET

13.1 Access control
Lobby

NOT MET

24.5 Design · package holding
Mail Facility

NOT MET

Remediation plan

FOR SHIELD III

Add Identification-level cameras along the site edge

Areas of the property line with limited lighting are not covered by cameras. Add tamper-resistant exterior cameras with low-light capability, reaching at least 250 px/m at the target.

SECTION	EFFORT	COST EST.
1.2	Medium	\$\$

Solutions Marketplace

Search providers

All control areas

All zones

N

Northline Video

SURVEILLANCE

Exterior cameras and low-light imaging for site perimeters.

K

Keystone Access

ACCESS CONTROL

Readers, gates and visitor management for lobbies and docks.

L

Lumen Site Lighting

LIGHTING

Perimeter and parking lighting designed for camera clarity.

1 See your gaps

Every requirement the building does not yet meet, by section and control area.

2 Plan and budget

Actions with effort and cost estimates to help you choose what to fix first.

3 Compare solutions

Browse providers by control area and request quotes. Listings are not endorsements by SBC.

Shown with sample data and fictional providers. Field assessments are completed on the SHIELD assessment platform, powered by ADRM, or with the manual assessment form. Assessment data stays private to the building owner and its assessor.

Become a SHIELD Accredited Professional.

SAPs are the independent professionals who assess buildings against SHIELD. Consultants, architects, engineers and integrators can all apply.

- 1 Apply** **YOU**
Create your account and share your experience in security, design, engineering or operations.
- 2 Screening** **SBC**
Every applicant goes through background screening before taking the exam.
- 3 Prepare** **YOU**
Study the SHIELD Framework on your own, or take optional SHIELD Academy courses.
- 4 Pass the exam** **YOU**
The SAP exam is taken online and lasts 2 hours. With an active SAP, you can take the SAP-A exam.
- 5 Assess buildings** **SAP**
Use the SHIELD assessment platform free of charge and appear in the SAP directory.

SAP

SHIELD Accredited Professional

Assess buildings against the SHIELD Framework and lead certification projects.

Renews every 2 to 3 years · 15 CE hours per 2 years

SAP-A

SHIELD Accredited Professional, Advanced

For complex, high-risk and SHIELD III projects. Requires an active SAP.

Renews every 2 to 3 years · 30 CE hours per 2 years

Next steps

Know where your building stands.

Start your certification, become an accredited professional, or keep learning with the people who wrote SHIELD.

1

Certify a building

Register your building and get matched with a SAP.

2

Become a SAP

Apply, pass the exam and start assessing buildings.

3

Learn

Get the Newsletter on Security Design, watch webinars, or explore SHIELD Academy.

SECURE BUILDING COUNCIL

securebuildingcouncil.com

info@securebuildingcouncil.com

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overview reflects the framework as of October 2026 and
may be updated.