

Change Order Log

A numbered register of every change from the moment it is raised to the day it is paid, plus the rules that decide whether a change is worth anything by the time you get to the end of the job.

Who it is for. Anybody who has done extra work on a handshake and then discovered that the contract had a notice period in it.

Why a log and not a folder

Change orders get lost one at a time. A folder tells you what you filed. A log tells you what is outstanding, how long it has been outstanding, and whether anybody ever answered you.

Number them sequentially from one and never reuse a number, including for the ones that get rejected. A gap in the numbering is the first thing anybody looks for when a claim goes anywhere serious.

Track time as well as money. A change that adds four days and no dollars is still a change, and if you never asked for the four days you have quietly agreed to absorb them.

Job header

JOB NAME AND NUMBER	CUSTOMER OR GENERAL CONTRACTOR
CONTRACT DATE	ORIGINAL CONTRACT SUM
CONTRACT CHANGE CLAUSE, BY ARTICLE NUMBER	NOTICE PERIOD FOR A CHANGE, IN DAYS
NOTICE PERIOD FOR A DIFFERING SITE CONDITION, IN DAYS	WHO IS CONTRACTUALLY AUTHORISED TO APPROVE A CHANGE

The log, part one: raising it

Fill this the day the change comes up, not the week after.

NO.	DATE RAISED	RAISED BY	DESCRIPTION	REASON CODE	DAYS CLAIMED	PROPOSED COST

NO.	DATE RAISED	RAISED BY	DESCRIPTION	REASON CODE	DAYS CLAIMED	PROPOSED COST

The number in the first column is the change order number. Carry the same number across to part two so the two halves stay tied together.

The log, part two: getting it decided and paid

Same numbers, same order. This is the half you read when you want to know what is still outstanding.

NO.	SUBMITTED	STATUS	APPROVED AMOUNT	APPROVED DAYS	DATE APPROVED	INVOICED	PAID

Reason codes

Use a code on every row. At the end of a job, sorting by code tells you something about the job you could not see while you were on it.

CODE	MEANING
OD	Owner or general contractor directed change
DSC	Differing site condition: the ground was not what the documents said
DE	Design error or omission in the documents
UU	Unforeseen or mislocated utility
QV	Quantity variation against the bid quantities

CODE	MEANING
RK	Rock or unclassified excavation
WX	Weather or a delay outside your control
ACC	Acceleration: you were told to go faster
AC	Access: the site was not available when it was supposed to be
OT	Other, described in full on the row

The rules that make a log worth keeping

- ☐ Raise it the day it happens, in writing, to the person the contract names
- ☐ Give notice inside the contract's notice period, even if you cannot price it yet. Notice and price are two separate obligations
- ☐ Never do the work first and paper it afterwards, unless the contract's directive clause makes you, and then say so in writing
- ☐ Price it the same way you priced the bid, off the same worksheet, so it can be defended line by line
- ☐ Claim the time as well as the money, in the same letter
- ☐ If you are directed to proceed before it is priced, write proceeding under direction, price to follow, and keep daily tickets for every hour of it
- ☐ Keep a daily ticket for every changed work day, signed on site
- ☐ Photograph the condition that caused it before you fix it
- ☐ Chase anything sitting in submitted status, in writing, and log the chase
- ☐ Do not let approved changes go uninvoiced. A signed change order that was never billed is the easiest money anybody ever lost

Running totals

ORIGINAL CONTRACT SUM

CURRENT CONTRACT SUM

RAISED BUT NOT YET SUBMITTED

APPROVED BUT NOT YET INVOICED

DAYS CLAIMED TO DATE

APPROVED CHANGES TO DATE

SUBMITTED AND AWAITING A DECISION

REJECTED

INVOICED BUT NOT YET PAID

DAYS GRANTED TO DATE

Read your own contract's clause

Every standard form handles changes differently, and a general contractor's own subcontract usually handles them worse than a standard form does. Find the change clause and the differing site conditions clause in the contract you are actually signing, and write their article numbers in the header above.

If there is no differing site conditions clause at all, that is not an oversight. It means the risk of the ground being different from the documents sits with you, and it belongs in your bid as a contingency rather than in a claim later.

Where this comes from

Every code, standard and statute this sheet leans on. Check them.

AIA Contract Documents

<https://www.aiacontracts.com/>

A201 general conditions and the A401 subcontract are the forms most commercial dirt work is signed under.

Ladders into module 07, The Contract Clauses That Eat the Profit.

Checkered Flag Excavation, Inc. De Soto and Festus, Missouri. Founded 2000. Free to print, copy and hand to anybody. Not legal, tax or engineering advice.

<https://dirtworkbusiness.com/library/change-order-log>