



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SURETY BOND PRODUCERS**

7735 Old Georgetown Road, Suite 900

Bethesda, MD 20814

Tel: 240.200.1270

Fax: 240.200.1295

[www.nasbp.org](http://www.nasbp.org)

February 11, 2025

Re: Requirement for Minimum Surety Company A.M. Best Rating Exceeding "A-"

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the National Association of Surety Bond Producers, Inc. (NASBP), a national trade association of agencies employing licensed surety bond producers placing surety bonds throughout the United States, I am providing information to you regarding the significant impacts of an overly restrictive requirement that surety companies furnishing bonds for contracts have A.M. Best Co. minimum financial strength ratings exceeding "A-".

NASBP understands and appreciates that contracting authorities have substantial interests in ensuring that only admitted surety companies with *excellent* financial strength ratings are permitted to prequalify companies seeking contract awards and to provide verification of the appropriate level of bonding capacity. NASBP, however, cautions that requirements for overly restrictive minimum financial strength ratings, those requiring solely A.M. Best ratings of "A", "A+" or "A++", run counterproductive to the broader interests of contracting agencies and taxpayers. Under A.M. Best's Financial Strength Rating Guide, "A+" and "A++" ratings are described as "Superior"; and "A" and "A-" ratings are described as "Excellent". A copy of the Best's Financial Strength Rating Guide is attached for your reference.

Minimum financial strength ratings exceeding A.M. Best "A-" serve unnecessarily to limit competition, increase pricing, and deter small and disadvantaged business interest and participation, as restricting acceptable sureties to only those with "A" or higher ratings will limit significantly the pool of admitted surety companies which support or have established relationships with qualified contracting businesses. To reiterate, ratings of "A-" or higher are deemed "Excellent" or "Superior" by A.M. Best.

For these reasons, NASBP urges your reconsideration to establish a minimum financial strength rating requirement of A.M. Best Co. financial strength rating of "A-" or higher.

Sincerely,

Mark H. McCallum  
Chief Executive Officer

## GUIDE TO BEST'S FINANCIAL STRENGTH RATINGS – (FSR)

A Best's Financial Strength Rating (FSR) is an independent opinion of an insurer's financial strength and ability to meet its ongoing insurance policy and contract obligations. An FSR is not assigned to specific insurance policies or contracts and does not address any other risk, including, but not limited to, an insurer's claims-payment policies or procedures, the ability of the insurer to dispute or deny claims payment on grounds of misrepresentation or fraud, or any specific liability contractually borne by the policy or contract holder. An FSR is not a recommendation to purchase, hold or terminate any insurance policy, contract or any other financial obligation issued by an insurer, nor does it address the suitability of any particular policy or contract for a specific purpose or purchaser. In addition, an FSR may be displayed with a rating identifier, modifier or affiliation code that denotes a unique aspect of the opinion.

### Best's Financial Strength Rating (FSR) Scale

Rating Categories	Rating Symbols	Rating Notches*	Category Definitions
Superior	A+	A++	Assigned to insurance companies that have, in our opinion, a superior ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations.
Excellent	A	A-	Assigned to insurance companies that have, in our opinion, an excellent ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations.
Good	B+	B++	Assigned to insurance companies that have, in our opinion, a good ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations.
Fair	B	B-	Assigned to insurance companies that have, in our opinion, a fair ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations. Financial strength is vulnerable to adverse changes in underwriting and economic conditions.
Marginal	C+	C++	Assigned to insurance companies that have, in our opinion, a marginal ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations. Financial strength is vulnerable to adverse changes in underwriting and economic conditions.
Weak	C	C-	Assigned to insurance companies that have, in our opinion, a weak ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations. Financial strength is very vulnerable to adverse changes in underwriting and economic conditions.
Poor	D	-	Assigned to insurance companies that have, in our opinion, a poor ability to meet their ongoing insurance obligations. Financial strength is extremely vulnerable to adverse changes in underwriting and economic conditions.

\* Each Best's Financial Strength Rating Category from "A+" to "C" includes a Rating Notch to reflect a gradation of financial strength within the category. A Rating Notch is expressed with either a second plus "+" or a minus "-"

### Financial Strength Non-Rating Designations

Designation Symbols	Designation Definitions
E	Status assigned to insurers that are publicly placed, via court order into conservation or rehabilitation, or the international equivalent, or in the absence of a court order, clear regulatory action has been taken to delay or otherwise limit policyholder payments.
F	Status assigned to insurers that are publicly placed via court order into liquidation after a finding of insolvency, or the international equivalent.
S	Status assigned to rated insurance companies to suspend the outstanding FSR when sudden and significant events impact operations and rating implications cannot be evaluated due to a lack of timely or adequate information, or in cases where continued maintenance of the previously published rating opinion is in violation of evolving regulatory requirements.
NR	Status assigned to insurance companies that are not rated; may include previously rated insurance companies or insurance companies that have never been rated by AM Best.

### Rating Disclosure – Use and Limitations

A Best's Credit Rating (BCR) is a forward-looking independent and objective opinion regarding an insurer's, issuer's or financial obligation's relative creditworthiness. The opinion represents a comprehensive analysis consisting of a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of balance sheet strength, operating performance, business profile and enterprise risk management or, where appropriate, the specific nature and details of a security. Because a BCR is a forward-looking opinion as of the date it is released, it cannot be considered as a fact or guarantee of future credit quality and therefore cannot be described as accurate or inaccurate. A BCR is a relative measure of risk that implies credit quality and is assigned using a scale with a defined population of categories and notches. Entities or obligations assigned the same BCR symbol developed using the same scale, should not be viewed as completely identical in terms of credit quality. Alternatively, they are alike in category (or notches within a category), but given there is a prescribed progression of categories (and notches) used in assigning the ratings of a much larger population of entities or obligations, the categories (notches) cannot mirror the precise subtleties of risk that are inherent within similarly rated entities or obligations. While a BCR reflects the opinion of A.M. Best Rating Services, Inc. (AM Best) of relative creditworthiness, it is not an indicator or predictor of defined impairment or default probability with respect to any specific insurer, issuer or financial obligation. A BCR is not investment advice, nor should it be construed as a consulting or advisory service, as such, it is not intended to be utilized as a recommendation to purchase, hold or terminate any insurance policy, contract, security or any other financial obligation, nor does it address the suitability of any particular policy or contract for a specific purpose or purchaser. Users of a BCR should not rely on it in making any investment decision; however, if used, the BCR must be considered as only one factor. Users must make their own evaluation of each investment decision. A BCR opinion is provided on an "as is" basis without any expressed or implied warranty. In addition, a BCR may be changed, suspended or withdrawn at any time for any reason at the sole discretion of AM Best.

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