



City of Atascadero Community Development Department

PUBLIC INFORMATION - BUILDING SERVICES

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WHEN IS A CALIFORNIA LICENSED ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER REQUIRED TO STAMP AND SIGN PLANS?

The State of California Business and Professions Code establishes levels of complexity at which design professionals are required to certify the safety of any building by affixing their signatures and license numbers to the plans and calculations. It also requires agencies that issue building permits to determine that the person(s) signing plans submitted for approval is/are appropriately registered or licensed. Further, the building official may require plans and calculations to be prepared and designed by a registered professional architect or engineer licensed in the State of California.

(ref: Business and Professions Code (B&P) Code Section 5535 – 5538 and 6730 - 6749; 2010 California Building Code Section 107)

All final plans, specifications, reports, or calculations for buildings or structures that are **not exempt** shall be prepared by a licensed engineer or architect and, at the time of permit issuance, shall include a signature, stamp or seal, registration/license number and expiration date.

EXEMPT STRUCTURES INCLUDE:

- Single family dwellings of conventional wood-frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height, and not located in liquefaction and landslide prone areas of Seismic Design Category “E” or “F”.
- Multiple dwellings containing not more than four dwelling units (total of existing plus new) of wood-frame construction on any lawfully divided lot.
- Garages or other structures appurtenant to single-family dwelling or multiple dwellings not more than two stories and basement in height.
- Agricultural and ranch buildings unless the building official deems that an undue risk to the public health, safety or welfare is involved.

If any portion of any exempt structure deviates from substantial compliance with conventional light wood-frame construction as defined by the current building code as adopted by our jurisdiction, the building official shall require the preparation of plans, drawings, specifications or calculations for that portion by or under the direct supervision of a licensed architect or professional engineer. The documents for that portion shall bear the stamp and signature of the licensee who is responsible for their preparation. In this case, the project engineer or architect of record shall supply to the building official a separate “Letter of General Compliance” and/or “Shop Drawing Approval” stamp.

UNLICENSED PROFESSIONALS MAY ALSO PREPARE PLANS FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Nonstructural store fronts, interior alterations, fixtures, cabinetwork, furniture, or other appliances or equipment.
- Any nonstructural work necessary to provide for their installation. However, an unlicensed person may not prepare plans for those alterations that will change or affect any components of the structural system or safety of the building or its occupants. Safety of the building includes such items as exiting, fire, structural, and other code requirements.

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS THAT REQUIRE AN ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER:

Except as specifically noted above, here are some examples of projects that require plans to be prepared, signed and stamped by a California Professional Engineer or California Registered Architect:

- New buildings and additions to existing buildings of occupancies other than Group R Division 3 or Group U occupancies,
- All non-exempt Group R, Division 1, Group R, Division 2 occupancies, and Group R, Division 4 occupancies,
- All non-exempt work in A (assembly) occupancies, E (school and day care) occupancies, F (factory and industrial) occupancies, H (hazardous) occupancies, I (institutional) occupancies, R-1 and R-2 (multi-family and residential care) occupancies and S (storage) occupancies,
- All non-exempt work in B (business) occupancies, S (storage) occupancies, or M (mercantile) occupancies, including interior alterations with walls and partitions over 5'9" in height, or ceiling work which covers a floor area greater than 3,000 sq ft,
- Energy forms ENV-1, LTG-1, and MECH-1, unless by licensed contractor who performs work,
- Remodels to non-exempt buildings with interior or exterior structural alterations,
- Interior alteration with an occupancy change that triggers accessibility upgrades or increases hazard, including an analysis for determination of accessibility hardship request,
- Remodels to non-exempt buildings that alters the means of egress (exit) requirements,
- Projects where structural framing and/or foundation work deviates from conventional construction guidelines outlined in CBC Chapters 18, 19 and Section 2308 and/or is located in liquefaction and landslide prone areas of Seismic Design Category "E" or "F",
- Storage racks over 8 ft in height,
- Tanks and vessels with a capacity of greater than 5,000 gallons, and/or whose height to diameter or width ratio is less than 2:1,
- Mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems for non-exempt buildings (unless prepared by installing contractor),
- Non-structural components or equipment attached to buildings requiring design per CBC Chapter 16 (generally equipment weighing over 400lbs.),
- Lateral force-resisting systems utilizing poles embedded in the ground,
- Residential outdoor barbecues greater than four ft. in height.
- Retaining walls that require a building permit unless using City approved design.
- Flagpole when installed on commercial or public property, or on residential properties when greater than 20 ft in height.
- Any project deemed by the building official to require design by a California licensed architect or professional engineer.

AIDING AND ABETTING OCCURS WHEN A CALIFORNIA LICENSED ARCHITECT:

- Assists unlicensed individuals to circumvent the Architects Practice Act. (B & P Code Section 5500 et seq.)
- Stamps and signs documents which have not been prepared by the architect or in the architect's office or under the architect's immediate and responsible direction.
- Permits his or her name to be used for the purpose of assisting any person, not an architect, to evade the provisions of the Architects Practice Act.

FOR QUESTIONS REGARDING THE LICENSE STATUS OF A REGISTERED ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER PLEASE CONTACT:

- California Architects Board (916) 445-3394 or www.cab.ca.gov
- California Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (916) 263-2222 or www.dca.ca.gov/pels