



## Handbook For Building Officials



**June 2009**

## INTRODUCTION

This manual has been jointly published by the Alabama Board for Registration of Architects and the Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. Its purpose is to aid Building Officials and design professionals in understanding the laws and administrative rules governing the practice of architecture and engineering in Alabama. It is intended to be a source of basic information and does not attempt to address all of the questions concerning the specific practices of architecture or engineering.

Building codes and professional registration laws are meant to work together. Building Officials, the architects registration board and the engineering licensing board each exist to protect the public against unsafe structures. These registration/licensure board officials protect the public by ensuring that all design professionals have proper education and training and pass rigorous examinations on technical and practice issues within their area of expertise. Building Officials promulgate and enforce building code requirements that are intended to protect the public's health and safety.

Alabama law has some limited exemptions that permit unregistered or unlicensed persons to prepare construction documents for single-family houses, farm buildings, or other structures of limited scope. However, it is clear public policy in our state, and indeed all states, that structures of significant size or complexity must be designed by registered/licensed professionals.

Building Officials, with their review and inspection processes, are an effective means of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public, safeguarding property, and promoting public good. The Building Officials are not, however, responsible for the design of buildings and structures. They must rely on competent design professionals operating within the Alabama Law governing their profession to prepare proper documents and observe construction to assure safe buildings and structures.

If you need further information or assistance concerning requirements of the two state boards, or wish to contact the State Fire Marshal, please see contact information below:

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Board for Registration of Architects  
770 Washington Avenue, Suite 150  
Montgomery, AL 36130-4450  
Phone: (334) 242-4179  
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P.O. Box 304451  
Montgomery, AL 36130-4451  
Phone: (334) 242-5568  
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Ed Paulk, State Fire Marshal  
Department of Insurance  
201 Monroe Street, Suite 1700  
Montgomery, AL 36130-3351  
Phone: 334-241-4166  
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# HANDBOOK FOR BUILDING OFFICIALS

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## DEFINITIONS

The Code of Alabama defines the following definitions for the practice of architecture and the practice of engineering as follows:

**ARCHITECTURE**: “When an individual holds himself out as able to render or when he does render any service by consultations, investigations, evaluations, preliminary studies, plans, specifications, contract documents and a coordination of all factors concerning the design and observation of construction of buildings or any other service in connection with the design, observation or construction of buildings located within the boundaries of the state, regardless of whether such services are performed in connection with one or all of these duties or whether they are performed in person or as the directing head of an office or organization performing them.” [§34-2-30(2) Code of Alabama, 1975]

**ENGINEERING**: “Any professional service or creative work, the adequate performance of which requires engineering education, training, and experience in the application of special knowledge of the mathematical, physical, and engineering sciences to such services or creative work as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design and design coordination of engineering works and systems, planning the use of land and water, performing engineering surveys and studies, and the review of construction or other design products for the purpose of monitoring compliance with drawings and specifications; any of which embraces such services or work, either public or private, in connection with any utilities, structures, buildings, machines, equipment, processes, work systems, projects, and industrial or consumer products; equipment of a control, communications, computer, mechanical, electrical, hydraulic, pneumatic or thermal nature, insofar as they involve safeguarding life, health, or property; and including other professional services necessary to the planning, progress, and completion of any engineering services.” [§34-11-1(7) Code of Alabama 1975]

**ARCHITECT**: A person who is currently registered in the State of Alabama as an Architect by the Board for Registration of Architects after having completed educational, experience, and examination requirements. *Note: Throughout the rest of this document, the term “architect” means a registered architect as defined above.*

**ENGINEER**: A person who is currently licensed in the State of Alabama as a Professional Engineer by the Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors after having completed educational, experience, and examination requirements. *Note: Throughout the rest of this document, the term “engineer” means a licensed professional engineer as defined above.*

**REGISTERED/LICENSED**: Under Alabama law, an architect is “registered” whereas an engineer or land surveyor is “licensed.” For the intent of this document, there is no difference in the use of these words. Wording hereafter will generally refer to “registered” and this should be construed to mean registered or licensed.

## EXEMPT STRUCTURES

The Architects Registration Act provides limited instances where a person who is not registered as an architect may design and supervise the erection or alteration of a building. The following structures are exempt from the registration law requirements:

1. A detached single-family dwelling and any sheds, storage buildings and garages incidental thereto (*See Standard Building Code Congress Inter-national, Chapter 311 - Residential Occupancy-Group R; Also see International Building Code, Section 310 – Residential Group R*);
2. Farm buildings, including barns, silos, sheds, or housing for farm equipment and machinery, livestock, poultry or storage.
3. Utility works, structures, or building (provided that the person performing such architectural works is employed by an electric, gas, or telephone public utility regulated pursuant to the laws of Alabama or by a corporation affiliated with such utility).
4. Any other type building(s) with a total area less than 2,500 square feet and is not intended for assembly occupancy except schools, churches, auditoriums or other buildings intended for the assembly occupancy of people. (IMPORTANT NOTE: The Standard Building Code states that buildings less than 5,000 square feet do not require an architect. The State law overrules the building code in this regard).

Similarly, the engineering statutes provide limited instances where an unlicensed person may design and supervise the erection or alteration of various structures in specific circumstances specified by the exemptions. The following are exempt:

1. Practice of engineering or land surveying for the government by officers and employees of the U.S. Government whose compensation is not based on a fee.
2. Practice of engineering or land surveying with respect to transportation or utility facilities by any transportation company or public utility subject to regulation by the Alabama Public Service

Commission, Federal Communications Commission, Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or by officers and employees of such a company, its parents, affiliates, or subsidiaries, whose compensation is not based in whole or in part on a fee.

3. The execution as a contractor of work designed by a professional engineer or the supervision of the construction of such work as a foreman or superintendent.

NOTE: Even though a structure may be exempt, certain components may require the services of a professional engineer or an architect.

## **AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS**

Presented in this section are descriptions of the general areas of responsibility for architects and engineers. The descriptions and examples are not all inclusive, but are intended to give general guidance on the practice of the two professions.

### **A. Architects**

Architects must be concerned with the basic concepts of the full spectrum of design considerations. Architects must develop a comprehensive package of design documents for submitting to the building department, taking all aspects of the project into account and coordinating various submissions prepared by other project team members. Listed below are examples of the matters architects typically address in gauging their services and building permit documents toward meeting a standard-of-care benchmark:

1. Site layout (parking, zoning requirements, grading, landscaping, building layout)
2. Aesthetics and overall design.
3. Building classification (occupancy, type of construction).
4. Building circulation and exiting (stairway, exit width, travel distances, corridors).
5. Life safety considerations (requirements for sprinklers, fire ratings, fire walls, separations, fire alarms, smoke control).
6. Interior space planning.
7. Interior and exterior finish materials (durability, function, aesthetics, fire ratings).
8. Environmental impacts (sound attenuation, quality of living, impact on natural surroundings).
9. Physically handicapped criteria.
10. Project coordination.
11. Engineering incidental to the practice of architecture.

### **B. Engineers**

Engineers are concerned with the planning, analysis, and design of particular building systems. Through education and training they have detailed knowledge of how specialized components of a building must work. Listed

below are examples of areas engineers typically address as a standard of care measure in building permit application documents:

1. Structural systems (framing, structural connections, foundations).
2. Electrical systems (power distribution, grounding, security, fire alarm, and smoke detection).
3. Mechanical systems (drains and venting, water distribution systems, HVAC, fire protection system).
4. Soils analysis (soils reports, soil stabilization, geotechnical investigations).
5. Civil works (site layout, site drainage, grading, utilities, circulation).
6. Coordination of engineering works (power stations, dams, bridges, sewage treatment facilities).
7. Project coordination.
8. Architecture incidental to the practice of engineering.

## INTERIOR DESIGNERS AND REGISTERED INTERIOR DESIGNERS

On May 21, 2001, the State of Alabama Legislature passed the Interior Design Consumer Protection Act (hereafter known as “Act”) 34-15B-1 et. seq. It was signed by the Governor on May 21, 2001, and amended by the State Legislature in 2006. Under the new Act, there are two types of interior design professional established, each with different levels of practice ability.

Interior designer: An interior designer can practice in any building or space within a building consisting of a total area up to 5,001 square feet (465 sq m). An interior designer cannot practice in any building or space within a building which exceeds 5,001 square feet.

An interior designer cannot practice in schools, churches, auditoriums or other buildings intended for assembly occupancy as defined in the applicable edition of the Building Code. An interior designer cannot design building systems relating to architectural and engineering interior construction—including building structural support, elevators, plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, fire protection, and mechanical and electrical systems, except the specification of fixtures (light) and lamps within interior spaces. An interior designer cannot modify existing building stairwells and elevator shafts. An interior designer cannot modify existing building construction so as to alter the number of persons for which the means of egress of a building is designed.

Registered interior designer: An interior designer who passes a “sealed level” examination is a registered interior designer. The Act empowers the Interior Design Board to write and offer a “sealed level” examination. **It is important to note that a sealed level examination has not been implemented at this time. Currently, there are no registered interior designers.**

A registered interior designer can practice in any building or space within a building regardless of area, size, or use. A registered interior designer cannot design building systems relating to architectural and engineering interior construction—including building structural support, elevators, plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, fire protection, and mechanical and electrical systems, except the specification of fixtures (light) and lamps within interior spaces. An interior designer cannot modify existing building

stairwells and elevator shafts. An interior designer cannot modify existing building construction so as to alter the number of persons for which the means of egress of a building is designed.

For more information regarding the practice of interior design, contact their licensing board:

State of Alabama  
Board of Registration for Interior Design  
P.O. Box 11026  
Birmingham, AL 35202-1026  
Phone: (205) 317-0356  
[id.admin@idboard.alabama.gov](mailto:id.admin@idboard.alabama.gov)  
[www.idboard.alabama.gov](http://www.idboard.alabama.gov)

## **ALABAMA BUILDING COMMISSION REVIEWS OF CERTAIN STRUCTURES**

Under state law, the State of Alabama Building Commission (ABC) reviews projects built on state property or with state funds, schoolhouses (public and private), hotels and motels, and motion picture theaters for code compliance prior to commencement of construction. Please refer to State of Alabama Building Commission's Manual of Procedures (most current revisions) at [www.bc.alabama.gov](http://www.bc.alabama.gov).

The procedures for submitting a project for review can be found in Chapter 3 of the Manual of Procedures.

The following paragraphs are also copied from the Manual of Procedures:

**“REQUIRED EMPLOYMENT OF DESIGN PROFESSIONALS:** The Awarding Authority of a public construction or improvement project that is to be supervised and administered by the ABC shall employ the services of registered architects and engineers in accordance with Title 34, Chapter 2 - Architects and Chapter 11 - Engineers and Land Surveyors, Code of Alabama 1975. An architect or architectural firm shall be employed as the primary design professional to design and observe the construction or improvement of a building or facility. An engineer or engineering firm specializing in a certain discipline of engineering may be employed as the primary design professional when the primary purpose and design of the project is within the specialty of the engineer or engineering firm and architectural design is incidental to the overall project design.”

**“FULL PROFESSIONAL TEAM:** The primary design professional shall employ the services of consulting engineers, and consulting architects in the case of an engineering project, so as to provide a full professional team as dictated by the disciplines of architectural and engineering design involved in the project. Designs of structural, mechanical electrical and other specialized phases of engineering shall be performed by or under the supervision of professional engineers registered in Alabama (See Chapter 3 for exceptions involving “incidental work”). The consultants selected by the primary design professional are to be named in the O/A Agreement and are, therefore, subject to the approval of the Awarding Authority and ABC. The Consulting engineers named in the O/A Agreement are not to be changed without the written consent of the Awarding Authority.”

## **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH REVIEWS OF CERTAIN STRUCTURES**

Under state law, the Technical Services Unit of the Office of Facilities Management is responsible for the review and approval of drawings and specifications for the construction of new buildings, additions, alterations and renovations at health care facilities regulated by the Alabama Department of Public Health. Projects are reviewed for compliance with Alabama State Board of Health regulations and applicable codes. Technical Service Unit's telephone number is 334-206-5177 and additional information is available from their web site [www.adph.org/facmgmt](http://www.adph.org/facmgmt).

Approval of each constructed project, by staff of Technical Services, is required prior to a facility's occupancy, and prior to the Department's issuing a license to operate (when required). Refer to Provider Services, <http://www.adph.org/providers>, for licensure information. No licensing actions will be taken until Technical Services issues a Certificate of Completion to Provider Services.

Radiation equipment and associated rooms must also be reviewed and approved by Radiation Control of the Department, per State Board of Health regulation 420-3-26. Technical Services assists Radiation Control by forwarding submittals for review of installation and shielding. Shielding installations must also be tested prior to use. Contact Radiation Control at 334-206-5391 for more information. Projects in Jefferson County are reviewed by the Jefferson County Department of Health.

However, facilities reviewed by the Alabama of Public Health or divisions of a county government must also meet local building, permit, and zoning requirements.

### **OTHER AGENCY REVIEWS OF CERTAIN STRUCTURES**

Other agencies may also have responsibility for reviewing certain structures being designed and constructed in the State of Alabama. For example, under state law, the Armory Commission of Alabama reviews the design and construction of all National Guard armories in the state for compliance with military construction requirements. However, such facilities must also meet local building, permit, and zoning requirements. Questions about National Guard armory projects can be addressed to: Armory Commission of Alabama, P. O. Box 3711, Montgomery, Alabama 36109-0711, (334) 271-7275.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR STRUCTURES WHERE ALL SHEETS  
ARE SIGNED AND SEALED ONLY BY AN ARCHITECT OR ONLY BY AN  
ENGINEER**

There can be unusual occasions where a Building Official is faced with reviewing building design plans and supporting electrical, mechanical, and structural plans where all sheets of the plans are signed and sealed by only one professional (such as an architect only or an engineer only). The question then arises, "Is this one professional qualified to sign and seal both architectural design and all engineering design documents?" In the case when only one design professional designs and seals all building documents, the Architect's Registration Board has adopted rules and regulations governing Incidental Practice of Engineering (100-X-2-.18) copied below and the Engineer's Licensing Board encourages the Building Official to contact the Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors when the multi-discipline qualifications of the engineer are in question to discuss the scope of the project and the complexity of the submitted documents being signed and sealed by the engineer.

The appropriate boards have established processes to review violations or questionable practices associated with Incidental Practice, and, if warranted, can initiate further inquiry or investigation. If Alabama laws or administrative rules are violated, disciplinary action against the design professional could result.

If the Building Official has concern over the qualification of a single architect or engineer to seal all documents, the appropriate registration/licensing board should be contacted for guidance.

**100-X-2-.18. Incidental Practice of Engineering**

(1) Clarification: "Incidental Practice of Engineering" shall be clarified as follows:

- (a) The incidental practice of engineering may include a minor engineering item, but not a complete engineering system;
- (b) It is usually of a secondary nature and is typically a smaller portion of the main engineering project;

(c) It is an addition to the main engineering system and does not affect the primary engineering system; and

(d) Incidental engineering items are usually included in the architectural drawings.

(2) Requirements/documentation: An architect shall prepare no engineering documents except those documents clearly defined as engineering incidental to the practice of architecture. An architect who performs the incidental practice of engineering must maintain supporting data to document, justify and certify information to the permitting or regulatory authority.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR STRUCTURES WHERE MULTIPLE  
ENGINEERING DISCIPLINES ARE SIGNED AND SEALED ONLY BY  
ONE ENGINEER**

There can be unusual occasions where a Building Official is faced with reviewing building engineering plans where multiple engineering disciplines are signed and sealed by only one engineer. The question then arises, "Is this one professional qualified to sign and seal those disciplines?"

The Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors does not issue licenses by discipline. The Board's Code of Ethics identifies that the engineer or land surveyor shall not affix his or her signature or seal to any engineering or land surveying plan or document dealing with subject matter on which he or she is not qualified by education or experience to form a dependable judgment. If the Building Official has concern over the qualifications of a single engineer to sign various engineering disciplines of the design, the licensing board should be contacted for guidance.

## **SEALING PROFESSIONAL WORK**

Registered architects and engineers are responsible for their professional design services. The public, as well as Building Officials, expect competence in professional expertise. As a result, professional submissions such as construction documents, specifications, and calculations should clearly show the identity of the professional who prepared them by having affixed a seal and otherwise complying with the requirements of Alabama law. Without proper identification, ultimate responsibility for any deficiencies may not be clear.

The law and applicable codes in Alabama have requirements that professional submissions must be sealed by the professional who prepared them or supervised their preparation. Section 34-2-35(d) of the Architects Registration Act and Section 34-11-7(c) of the Engineers Licensure Act state that all construction documents, specifications, plats, and reports prepared by architects and engineers must be stamped with the seal of the responsible professional who is currently registered.

This state has specific laws requiring that construction documents submitted to governmental agencies bear the seal of a registered architect or engineer as appropriate. Standard Building Code, Paragraphs 104.2.1 and 104.2.3 states, with respect to non-exempt structures, that "all information, drawings, specifications and accompanying data shall bear the name and signature of the person responsible for the design" and the "design professional shall be an architect or engineer legally registered under the laws of this state regulating the practice of architecture or engineering and shall affix his official seal to said drawings, specifications, and accompanying data." Likewise, the International Building Code has similar provisions in paragraph 106.1, "The construction documents shall be prepared by a registered design professional where required by the statutes of the jurisdiction in which the project is to be constructed."

Building Officials should require that all construction documents have either the seal of an architect or engineer as appropriate, or have a notation on the construction documents or building permit application noting the state law exemption from the general rule requiring that all construction documents be prepared by registered professionals.

## STANDARDS FOR BUILDING CONSTRUCTION PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS SUBMISSIONS

Construction documents for most projects consist of drawings, specifications, and appropriate calculations. All elements shall complement each other. Completeness and coordination of all necessary information are the responsibility of the design professional. Construction documents submitted to the Building Official **must be of sufficient detail to clearly show the project in its entirety with emphasis on the following:**

1. Life safety
2. Means of egress
3. Barrier free accessibility
4. Structural integrity
5. Building code compliance
6. Definition of scope of work

Following is a suggested standard of drawings for review by Building Officials. Depending upon the size, nature and complexity of the building, not all of the drawings listed below may be necessary, but reference to Alabama Building Commission requirements ([www.bc.alabama.gov](http://www.bc.alabama.gov)) can provide guidance on standard-of-care requirements.

### Cover Sheet

1. Project identification
2. Project address and a location map
3. All design professionals identified
4. The principal design professional (the professional responsible for project coordination) shall be identified. All communications should be directed through this individual.
5. Design Criteria list:

- |      |                                  |       |                               |
|------|----------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|
| i.   | Occupancy group                  | vii.  | Square footage/allowable area |
| ii.  | Type construction classification | viii. | Fire sprinkler systems        |
| iii. | Location of property             | ix.   | Height & number of stories    |
| iv.  | Seismic risk                     | x.    | Occupant load                 |
| v.   | Design loads                     | xi.   | Land use zone                 |
| vi.  | Structural systems               | xii.  | Soil report                   |
|      |                                  | xiii. | Base flood elevation          |

### Site Plan

Show proposed new structure and any existing buildings or structures, all property lines with dimensions, all streets, easements and setbacks. Show all water, sewer, communication services, natural gas, telephone, and cable TV. Electrical points of connection, proposed utility service routes and existing utilities on the site. Show all required parking, drainage, and grading information. Indicate drainage inflow and outflow locations and specify areas required to be maintained for drainage purposes. When appropriate include a topographical survey. Show north arrow. Show dimensions for the location and size of components delineated on the site plan.

### Foundation Plan

Show all foundations and footings. Indicate size, locations, thicknesses, materials and strengths and reinforcing. Show all imbedded anchoring such as anchor bolts, hold-downs, post bases, etc. Provide a geotechnical report for the proposed structure at that site. Show dimensions for the location and size of all components delineated on the foundation plan.

### Floor Plans

Show all floors including basements. Show all rooms, with their use, overall dimensions and locations of all structural elements and openings. Show all doors and windows. Provide door and window schedules. All fire resistance rated assemblies, area of refuge, occupancy separations, fire blocking and draft stopping shall be shown. Show dimensions for the size of all rooms and the locations of other components delineated on the floor plans.

### Schedules

Room finishes, doors, hardware, windows, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, and structural.

### Framing Plans and Roof Framing Plans

Show all structural members, their size and methods of attachment, connections, location and materials for floors and roofs. Show roof plan. Show dimensions for the location and size of all components delineated on the room plan.

### Exterior Elevations

Show each view. Show all vertical dimensions and heights. Show openings and identify materials and show lateral bracing system, where applicable. Show dimensions and schedules.

### Building Sections and Wall Sections

Show materials of construction, non-rated and fire resistance rated assemblies and fire resistance rated penetrations. Show dimensions.

### Mechanical System

Show the mechanical system. Include all units, their sizes, mounting details, all duct work and duct sizes. Indicate all fire dampers where required. Provide equipment schedules. Submit energy conservation calculations per State of Alabama. Show dimensions.

### Plumbing System

Show all fixtures, piping, slopes, materials and sizes. Show point of connections to utilities, septic tanks, pre-treatment sewer systems and water wells. Show dimensions.

### Electrical System

Show all electrical fixtures (interior, exterior and site), wiring sizes and circuiting, grounding, panel schedules, single line diagrams, load calculations and fixture schedules. Show point of connection to utility. Show dimensions.

### Fire Sprinkler System

Show all sprinkler heads, piping valves, alarms, tamper switches, materials, and sizes. Show point of connection to the water system and fire alarm system. Show dimensions for the size and location of components delineated on the fire sprinkler system drawings.

### Structural Systems

Show foundation, structural members and where required, provide structural calculations for the structural systems of the project. Include calculations indicating compliance with seismic, wind, snow, live and dead loads.

### Specifications

Prepare specifications to further define the construction components, quality of materials, delineation of the materials and methods of construction, wall, floor and ceiling finishes and descriptions of all pertinent equipment. Schedules may be incorporated into the project manual in lieu of being delineated on the construction documents.

### Addenda and Changes

It is the responsibility of the individual identified on the cover sheet as the principal design professional to notify the Building Official of any and all changes throughout the project and provide revised construction drawings, calculations or other appropriate documentation prior to commencement of that portion of construction.

### Revisions

The party for submitting changes shall be identified at the beginning of the approval process. For clarity, all revisions should be identified with a delta symbol ( $\Delta$ ) and clouded on the construction documents or resubmitted as a new set of construction documents.

### Completeness of Documents

Construction documents for most projects consist of drawings, specifications and appropriate calculations. All elements shall complement each other. Completeness and coordination of all necessary information are the responsibility of the registered design professional.

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**I have a set of construction documents stamped and signed by an architect registered in a state other than Alabama. Does the plan submittal meet the requirements in Alabama?**

*No. Only design professionals currently registered with the appropriate board have authority to practice in Alabama. Professionals registered in other states must obtain registration in Alabama in order to practice in this state.*

**Can an Alabama registered architect or engineer place their stamp on construction documents prepared and stamped by an out-of-state architect or engineer for submittal in Alabama?**

*No. An Alabama registered architect or engineer may only prepare and seal drawings prepared by him or her or under his or her direct supervision. Under special circumstances, an engineer can place his/her signature and seal on a document prepared by another engineer if (1) the engineer has reviewed the document in sufficient depth to fully coordinate and assume responsibility for construction documents prepared by another licensed engineer and (2) the engineer originally producing the work has given consent of the review unless the connection of such engineer with the work has been terminated.*

**Can an owner/builder/contractor make changes to an architect's or engineer's construction documents?**

*No. When construction documents are prepared by an Alabama registered professional, no changes may be made except by that professional (or under certain conditions by another appropriately registered professional).*

**May an Alabama licensed engineer prepare and stamp the architectural portion of building construction documents?**

*Alabama law provides that architects or engineers can design structures. Engineers are permitted to perform architectural services incidental to their engineering practice. However, an engineer can only provide services in which he or she is competent to provide by education or experience. This generally limits the scope of building layout and design to less complicated structures and with smaller human occupancy.*

**May an Alabama registered architect prepare and stamp engineering documents associated with the structure which the architect designs?**

*An architect can prepare such engineering documents if he or she is competent to provide the services by education or experience. This generally limits the scope of engineering design to less complicated engineering services. The incidental practice of engineering may include a minor engineering item, but not a complete engineering system; It is usually of a secondary nature and is typically a smaller portion of the main engineering project; It is an addition to the main engineering system and does not affect the primary engineering system; and Incidental engineering items are usually included in the architectural drawings. An architect who performs the incidental practice of engineering must maintain supporting data to document, justify and certify information to the permitting or regulatory authority.*

**May anyone other than a registered architect or engineer prepare and submit construction documents to Building Officials?**

*Yes, in limited instances where exceptions in state law noted above permit submission of construction documents not sealed by a registered professional. Building Officials should document for the record at the time a permit is granted the exception in the law that allows design of the structure based on unsealed construction documents by an unlicensed person. Interior design professionals may submit construction documents for some projects.*

**What is the difference between an interior designer and a registered interior designer?**

*An interior designer can practice in a building or space within a building up to 5,001 square feet. An interior designer cannot practice in schools, churches, auditoriums or other buildings intended for assembly occupancy as defined in the applicable edition of the Building Code. A registered interior designer can practice in any building regardless of area or use (See commentary on page 4). Interior designers and registered interior designers cannot design building systems relating to architectural and engineering interior construction—including building structural support, elevators, plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, fire protection, and mechanical and electrical systems, except the specification of fixtures (light) and lamps*

within interior spaces. An interior designer cannot modify existing building stairwells and elevator shafts. An interior designer cannot modify existing building construction so as to alter the number of persons for which the means of egress of a building is designed.

**Do shop drawings have to be sealed by a registered engineer and submitted to the Building Official for approval?**

*No, typically shop drawings are intended as contractor or fabricator details. These are not part of the filed construction documents.*

**What are examples of component designs which are required to be sealed by an appropriate design professional when submitted to the Building Official for approval?**

*Component, or "manufactured," buildings are treated no differently than other buildings. The construction documents must be prepared and sealed by appropriate professionals registered in this state. Examples of such designs are: prefabricated metal buildings, roof truss systems, post tension or prestress designs and precast concrete building components.*

**Can a contractor sign the cover sheet of a set of construction documents prepared by an out-of-state architect or engineer and comply with the law?**

*No.*

**If an unregistered designer or owner prepares construction documents for a non-exempt building and applies for a building permit, should the Building Official suggest the designer or owner contact an architect or engineer, whichever is appropriate, and have the drawings and specifications reviewed and sealed?**

*No. Such action on the part of a registered architect or licensed engineer would be contrary to law and would put the professional's registration in jeopardy. A registered architect or engineer may seal only construction documents prepared by him or her or under his or her responsible control.*

**Who may issue change orders and addenda to building permit construction documents which have been filed for non-exempt structures?**

*Change orders, additional drawings, and/or addenda that alter documents required to be filed with the building department for non-exempt structures must bear the seal of the registered architect or engineer responsible for the modifications. This should generally be the seal of the architect or engineer that originally designed the project. For special circumstances, another design professional may seal changes or additions to the drawings.*

**Who can be the applicant for the building permit?**

*The applicant can be the owner, contractor, authorized agent, or the architect or engineer as appropriate. However, the registered professional's name shall be listed on the application. All modifications or revisions to the sealed construction documents required by the Building Official shall be provided to the registered professional by the Building Official.*

**What constitutes a valid engineer's document?**

*Each sheet of construction documents, drawings, documents, specifications and reports shall be signed, sealed, and dated by the licensed engineer. Where more than one sheet is bound together in one volume, the licensee may sign, seal, and date only the title or index sheet, providing that the signed sheet clearly identifies all of the other sheets comprising the bound volume, and also provided that any of the other sheets which were prepared by, or under the direction and control of, another licensee be signed, sealed and dated by said other licensee.*

**What constitutes a valid architect's sealed document?**

*The personal architect's seal is required on all drawings, duplication of drawings, construction documents, specifications, plats, and reports issued by an architect.*

**On a project where a building permit has been issued, what responsibility does the sealing architect have with regard to construction administration services?**

*The minimum construction administration services expected of the sealing architect deemed necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public shall be periodic site observations of the construction progress and quality, review of contractor submittal data and drawings, and reporting to the Building Official and owner any violations of codes or substantial deviations from the contract documents that the architect observed.*

Commentary: Construction administration is a component of the practice of architecture (see § 34-2-30(2) Ala. Code (1975)). When the sealing architect cannot perform construction administration, it is necessary to ensure that another qualified professional performs construction administration services until the project is completed. Therefore, if the sealing architect becomes aware that construction has commenced and he or she has not been engaged to provide at least minimum construction administration services, the sealing architect must report to the Building Official and the Board that he or she has not been, or is no longer, so engaged. If the architect informs the Board and local Building Official that he or she will not perform such services, the Board and Building Official can take any steps it deems necessary for the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the public. As with other architectural services, qualified employees of registered architects may perform construction administration services under the instruction, direct control and supervision of their employees. § 34-2-32a(1) Ala. Code (1975).

**Building Official Notes**

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