

Signature on Plans: Exempt Buildings Without Requiring a Licensed Architect or Registered Engineer

Policy and Procedure No.: **G-04-11**

August 2004 (Rev. October 2016)

Purpose

To establish a policy as to when and what extent signatures are required on plans. Further, to clarify who may design buildings or structures without requiring a licensed architect or registered engineer.

Background

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 5536)
 (Ref.: 2016 California Building Code, Section 107)

Policy

Building Plans

1. 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 information from the person(s) in responsible charge of the work as follows:

Person in Responsible Charge	Information Required on Plans
Civil Engineer, Soils Engineer or Structural Engineer	Wet Signature, Stamp or Seal, Registration / License Number, and Expiration Date
Architect	Wet Signature, Stamp or Seal, Registration / License Number, and Expiration Date
Electrical or Mechanical Engineer	Wet Signature, Contractor's License, Registration No. or Stamp or Seal, and Expiration Date

- A. Each sheet of the final plans shall bear such information. The wet signature may be made over a photocopy of the stamp and expiration date.
- B. Final calculations and specifications, if bound with numbered pages, require such information on the first page only. Loose sheets of final calculations, specifications, or clarification details must bear such information on each sheet.
- C. Plans submitted for review that is required to be prepared by an engineer or architect must designate the person(s) in responsible charge. A logo, stamp, or other similar information on the plans is sufficient for submittal purposes. If the person in responsible charge is not registered as required, then plans, specifications and calculations will not be accepted for plan review. The applicant should be directed to

the Building Safety & Inspection supervisor if there is a question in this area. If, during plan review, it is determined that the person in responsible charge is not registered as required, the plan reviewer should confirm that with his/her plan review supervisor and include registration requirements as part of the correction list.

2. Project plans may incorporate components (trusses for example) that are designed by an engineer or architect without requiring the component designer's signature on the project plans. In this case, the project engineer or architect of record shall supply to the Building Safety & Inspection staff a separate "Letter of General Compliance" and/or "Shop Drawing Approval" stamp.
3. If there is a question regarding the license status of a registered architect, the *California Architects Board* may be contacted at (916) 574-7220; the architects' roster or their website may be contacted at www.cab.ca.gov.
4. If there is a question regarding the registration status of a registered engineer, the *California Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors* may be called at (916) 263-2222; their website is at www.dca.ca.gov/pels.

Exemptions

Unlicensed individuals may design **exempt** buildings or structures. Exempt buildings or structures are defined by the Architects Practice Act as follows:

- Single-family dwellings of wood frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height.
- Multiple dwellings containing no more than four dwelling units of wood frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height. However, this shall not be construed as allowing an unlicensed person to design multiple clusters of up to four dwelling units each to form apartment or condominium complexes where the total exceeds four units on any lawfully divided lot.
- Garages or other structures associated to such dwelling units, of wood frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height.
- Agricultural and ranch buildings of wood frame construction, unless the building official deems that an undue risk to the public health, safety, or welfare is involved.
- Design of nonstructural or nonseismic alterations or additions (*with the exception of commercial buildings*).

If any portion of any structure exempted by this section deviates from substantial compliance with conventional framing requirements for wood frame construction as defined by the current building code, 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 registered engineer. The documents for that portion shall bear the stamp and signature of the licensee who is responsible for their preparation.

(Ref.: Business and Professions Code (B&P) Code Section 5537)

(Ref.: 2016 California Building Code – Section 107)