



WHEN IS A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL REQUIRED?

Plans that can be prepared by an unlicensed person

Per California Business & Professions Code Sections [5537](#) & [6737](#), these four groups of structures may be designed by any person provided the wood frame structures substantially comply with current California Building Code conventional framing requirements:

1. Single-family dwellings of wood frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height.
2. Multiple dwellings containing no more than four dwelling units of wood frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height. However, this paragraph 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.
3. Garages or other structures appurtenant to buildings described under subdivision (a), of wood frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height.
4. Agricultural and ranch buildings of wood frame construction, unless the building official having jurisdiction deems that an undue risk to the public health, safety or welfare is involved.

Per California Business & Professions Code Sections [5538](#) & [6745](#), the following may also be designed by any person:

5. Nonstructural or nonseismic storefronts, interior alterations or additions, fixtures, cabinetwork, furniture, or other appliances or equipment including any nonstructural or nonseismic work necessary to provide for their installation, so long as those alterations do not change or affect the structural system or safety of the building.

Unlicensed persons may not design any building or structure component that changes or affects the safety of any building, including but not limited to, structural or seismic components. NOTE: Unlicensed designers must sign all plans (Architect's Practice Act).

Plans required to be designed by an Architect or Engineer:

The following are examples of work requiring plans which are stamped and signed by an engineer or architect registered by the State of California.

- Projects with interior or exterior structural alterations
- Interior Alteration with an occupancy change
- All Group A (Assembly) Occupancies
- All Group E (School and Day Care) Occupancies
- All Group F (Factory and Industrial) Occupancies
- All Group H (Hazardous) Occupancies
- All Group I (Industrial) Occupancies
- All Group R, Division 1,2, or 6 Occupancies
- All Group S (Storage) Occupancies
- Interior alterations with walls and partitions over 5 feet 9 inches in height or ceiling work which cover a floor areas greater than 3,000 square feet, for Groups B, S-1, S2, OR M Occupancies
- Storage racks over 8 feet in height

- Tanks and vessels
- Machinery and equipment support and anchorage, (there may be exceptions)
- Lateral force resisting systems utilizing poles embedded in the ground
- Any other project deemed by the Building Official to require professional designs by a California Registered Engineer or Architect.

Design Limitations for Professionals:

The following limitations for professionals are based on the California Health and Safety (HSC) and the Business and Professional Code (BPC). Please note that electronic signatures are accepted per California Code of regulations Title 16, Section 411.

Architects

May design any building of any type except the structural portion of a hospital (HSC section 15048 and BPC sections 5500.1 and 6737).

Landscape Architects

May not "practice, or offer to practice, architecture or engineering in any of its various recognized branches." (BPC section 5615)

Civil Engineers

May design any building except hospitals and schools (HSC section 39148, BPC sections 5537.5, 6731, 6735, and Education Code section 39148).

Structural Engineers

No limitations. May design any building of any type (BPC sections 6637.1, 6731, and 6736)