



When is a California Licensed Professional Engineer or Registered Architect 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 listed above, 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](#) and [6745](#), the following may also be designed by any person:

5. Non-structural or non-seismic storefronts, interior alterations or additions, fixtures, cabinetwork, furniture, or other appliances or equipment including any nonstructural or non-seismic 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.

However, an unlicensed person 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 projects that require plans to be prepared, stamped, and signed by a California Professional engineer or California Registered Architect.

- New Buildings,
- Additions to an existing building,
- 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 area greater than 3,000 square feet, for Groups B, S-1, S2, OR M Occupancies,
- Storage racks over 8 feet in height,
- Remodeling projects that create or alter fire rated walls or ceilings,
- Alteration which changes the means of egress (exit) requirements,
- Tanks and vessels,
- Machinery and equipment support and anchorage,
- 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.

Contact Information

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