



What plans submitted with permit applications to the Building Department require preparation by a licensed professional?

The design and modification of structures are generally regulated by state law, in particular the California Business and Professions Code (BPC) and California Building Standards Code (CBC). The Building Official's determination regarding whether plans must be prepared by a licensed professional is governed by state law as described below:

SECTIONS 5536.1 AND 6735 OF THE CALIFORNIA BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE (Licensing requirements for permitted construction documents)

- I. **All construction documents (plans, specifications, and design calculations) submitted with permit applications to the Building Department are required to be prepared and signed by a California licensed Engineer, Architect, Surveyor, or Contractor - practicing the profession for which he or she is licensed. (BPC §5500.1, §5536.1(c), §5537.1, §5537.4, §5537.5, §5537.6, §5537.7, §6735, §6735.3, and §6735.4)**

An unlicensed person, however, may prepare plans, specifications, and drawings for the following under Sections 5537 and 6737 of the BPC:

- a) Single family dwellings of wood frame construction not more than two stories and basement in height.
 - b) Multiple dwellings containing no more than four dwelling units of wood frame construction and not more than two stories and basement in height (with maximum of four dwelling units per lot).
 - c) Garages or other structures appurtenant to single-family dwelling or multiple dwellings (as described in subsection (a) and (b) above) not more than two stories and basement in height.
 - d) Agricultural and ranch buildings of wood frame construction unless the Building Official deems that undue risk to the public health, safety or welfare is involved.
- II. If any portion of the exempt structures listed in I (a)-(d) above deviates from the conventional framing requirements for wood frame construction in the most recent edition of the California Code of Regulations ("Title 24"), then plans and specifications for that portion must be signed and stamped by a licensed engineer or architect. (BPC §5537(b) and §6737.1(b))

- III. Plans and specifications for wood construction for the above exempt structures listed in I (a) – (d) complying with the requirements for conventional framing under Title 24 still require the following:
 - a) The construction documents must clearly indicate compliance with California Residential Code or the conventional provisions of CBC.
 - b) Structural design must be submitted as part of the application. It can be presented on a small size (8.5"x11") sheets or on the plans. Determination of specified members and components of the lateral force resisting systems, force transfer connections, and details must refer to a table, section, or detail of CRC or CBC.
 - c) Plans and specifications must be signed by the person preparing them (BPC §5536.1(a))

LICENSING REQUIREMENTS CONTAINED IN THE CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE

When it is required that documents be prepared by a registered design professional, the building official shall be authorized to require the owner to engage and designate on the building permit application a registered design professional who shall act as the registered design professional in responsible charge (CBC 107.3.4). Duties of the designated professional shall include (but not be limited) to the following:

- I. The registered design professional in responsible charge shall be responsible for reviewing and coordinating submittal documents prepared by others, including phased and deferred submittal items, for compatibility with the design of the building. (CBC 107.3.4 and BPC§550.1.(3))

SECTIONS 5538 AND 6745 OF THE CALIFORNIA BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE (Nonstructural store front or interior alterations or additions - license exempt)

These sections of the California Business and Professions Code do not prohibit any person from furnishing plans for the following: Non-structural storefront and non-structural or interior alterations (or non-structural work necessary to provide for their installation) which do not affect any components of the structural system, accessible path of travel or safety of the building. Safety of the building includes items such as egress, accessibility, fire protection, structural, and other code requirements.

ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL PLANS REQUIREMENTS (Except for Structures Regulated by the California Residence Code)

Electrical and Mechanical plans must to be prepared, stamped, signed, and dated by a licensed mechanical and electrical engineer respectively.ⁱ (BPC§ 6735.3 and 6735.4)

Exemptions:

- a) Specialty contractor (electrical or mechanical), licensed in California may design the work to be performed and supervised by the same contractor. Permitted drawings shall be signed by the person preparing them and shall indicate the license identification, among other things. (BPC §5536.1(a) and § 6737.3)
- b) Licensed civil engineer may practice any engineering in connection with or supplementary to civil engineering studies or activities. Permitted drawings shall be signed, stamped and dated by the licensee preparing them. (BPC §6737.2, § 6735.3 and 6735.4)

ⁱ Performance of engineering work under the exempt provisions of BPC §6747 does not apply to the requirements of permitted plans. Mechanical, electrical, plumbing and other construction documents, that are permitted or that are to be released for construction must be prepared, stamped, signed, and dated by the licensee preparing them. (BPC §6735.3 and 6735.4)