

THE PATH TO COMPLIANCE

All licensees are charged with having knowledge of the rules and statutes governing the practice of engineering and land surveying. These Board regulations however are general in nature and do not exactly fit every situation that arises in everyday practice. Licensees therefore must use their professional judgment when a special situation arises. The Board staff regularly assists licensees with compliance issues and we encourage you to call this office if you have questions regarding how to proceed in a certain situation. Also, new FAQ's are located on the Board's website at www.pels.ok.gov to assist you with compliance issues as well. Some of the more frequently asked questions about these special situations answered in 2009 were:

Q: What is the purpose of applying a seal to an engineering or land surveying document?

A: The act of sealing certifies that the licensee is competent in the subject matter and was in direct control and personal supervision of the work.

Q: My degree is in electrical engineering. I took the electrical PE exam and have been practicing electrical engineering exclusively. My church needs some mechanical engineering plans prepared for a sanctuary expansion. May I prepare these plans, or sign and seal those plans which were prepared by a mechanical contractor to help out my church that is on a very tight budget?

A: No. The Rules of Professional Conduct state that "Licensees shall practice only in the areas of their competence and shall undertake assignments only when qualified by education, examination or experience in the specific technical fields of engineering". A licensee may demonstrate additional areas of competence by one or more of the following pathways: Obtaining a degree in a new discipline of engineering; passing an NCEES PE exam in the new discipline; or obtaining supplemental experience of at least 4 years in the new discipline verified by at least one PE that has knowledge of the licensee's character and engineering experience.

Q: My Oklahoma City based engineering firm would like to open a branch office in Idabel. We won't have a PE in that office, but our PE's in Oklahoma City will be in responsible charge of the full time employee in the Idabel office. Is this allowed under the Board's new responsible charge rules?

A: Yes, if all provisions of the definition of responsible charge are met using electronic or communication means. Those provisions include: supervising the preparation of the plans or other engineering documents, having input prior to their completion, and reviewing the final documents prior to signing and sealing the work; having the authority to and making any necessary changes to the plans prior to signing and sealing the work; and being capable of answering questions as to the engineering decisions made during the work on the project in order to demonstrate that the engineer who is in responsible charge of the work did make the decisions. **The intent of the law shall not be met if an unlicensed person independently performs the engineering work.**



Bruce Pitts, PLS
Director of Enforcement

Q: Can a Tulsa land surveying firm open a branch office in Oklahoma City without having a PLS in the Oklahoma City office?

A: No, All surveying offices must have a professional land surveyor physically present at the location to be in responsible charge of and in direct control and personal supervision of the land surveying work.

Q: What are the Board rules about taking over work from another engineer or land surveyor on a project which is partially complete?

A: A successor licensee may take responsible charge over, and complete an engineering or land surveying project commenced by another licensee. The successor licensee shall perform or have responsible charge over all professional engineering or land surveyor services to include development of a complete design file including work or design criteria, calculations, code research, field notes, and any necessary and appropriate changes to the work. Non professional services, such as drafting, need not be redone by the successor licensee but must clearly and accurately reflect the successor licensee's professional work.

The successor licensee must clearly indicate by clouding, shading, numerically listing or other means the additions or revisions made to the original plans. **Removing the signature and seal and contact information of the initial licensee is not allowed.** The successor licensee then signs and seals the plans or documents in accordance with Board rules.

Have questions about signing, sealing, taking over the project commenced by another licensee? Call the Board office or review the FAQ's located on the website.



Contact Information

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ARE YOU IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OKLAHOMA TAX COMMISSION?

By law, the Board cannot renew a professional license if the licensee is in non-compliance with the Oklahoma Tax Commission. At times it is a lengthy process to get in compliance, so please make sure you allow yourself ample time prior to your renewal date.

Practicing engineering or land surveying with an expired license, even if it is expired due to issues with the tax commission, is a violation of state law and will be prosecuted by this Board.