



ENGINEERING LICENSING: THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE

A guide to licensing for professional engineers and engineering firms in every state

Executive Summary

Engineering is a highly regulated profession, requiring professional licenses nationwide as well as firm licenses in most states. Each state has unique requirements and procedures, so managing licenses across a large or growing engineering firm is a time-consuming and complex task. For firms that provide a combination of design, land surveying, or construction services, the complications multiply.

These requirements are in addition to the general licenses and registrations required of all businesses at the federal, state, and local levels, which firms must also include in their compliance plans. With each business milestone, new licensing and registration requirements must be evaluated and addressed.

Most firms deal with licensing and registration requirements on an as-needed basis through staff in the legal or operations departments, who are often in the difficult position of trying to stay on top of a complex cycle of reporting requirements and tasks with inadequate tools and support. Without dedicated compliance software, employees generally manage their filings through disparate systems including spreadsheets, calendars, and physical and digital file folders. All too often, this leads to costly license gaps, errors, missed business opportunities, and wasted staff hours.

But licensing shouldn't be a hurdle to success. In fact, with proactive management, licensing can boost growth, speed operations, and even provide financial returns.

To help engineering firms navigate state requirements and manage licensing successfully, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of requirements for professional engineers and engineering firms in all 50 states. Special attention is paid to the most common licensing pitfalls firms suffer and tips for avoiding them. Real-world cases are highlighted throughout to illustrate the hazards and provide insights into state enforcement efforts.

The paper concludes with an overview of options to manage licensing, including comparisons of in-house and outsourced solutions. A reference section is also provided with links to additional resources, including license guides for allied professions.

The goal is to help engineering firms turn state licensing from a source of frustration and expense into an asset providing measurable competitive and financial gains.

Licensing in the Engineering Industry

Due to the technical knowledge required to practice engineering, and the critical nature of the work, engineering is a highly regulated profession.

All states require professional engineers to be licensed, and most states also require a separate firm license or registration. Since firm licenses are always dependent on the underlying licenses of professional engineers, firms in those states must manage both levels of licensing proactively to maintain continuous, active licensure throughout their operations. For firms with clients or bidding opportunities in multiple states, this is a time-consuming, challenging task. This guide is designed to help engineering companies take a proactive approach to licensing that furthers their strategic goals and success.

ENGINEERING INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE, 2016



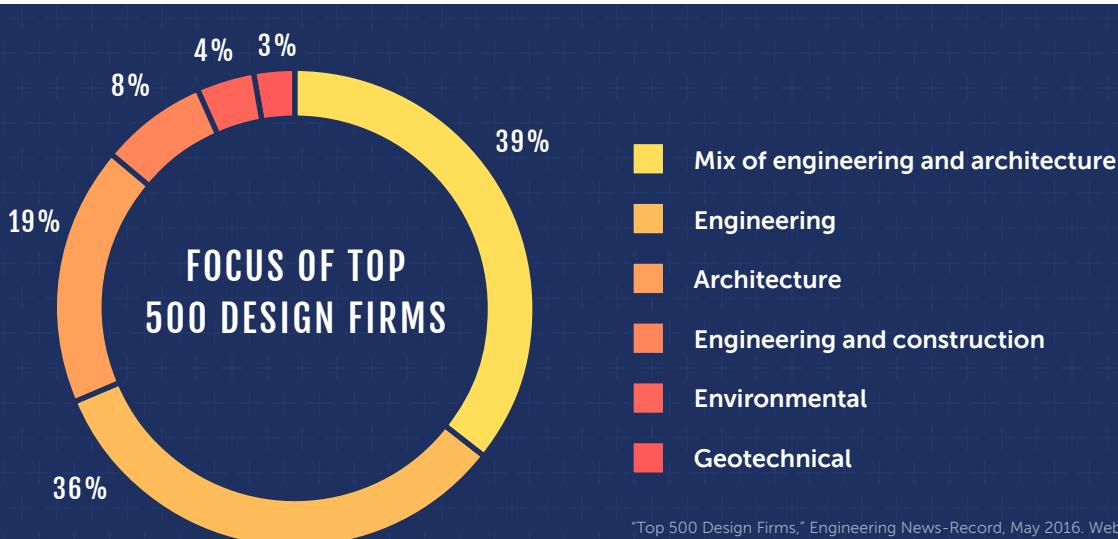
International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Web. <https://www.selectusa.gov/professional-services-industry-united-states> and National Council Examiners for Engineering and Surveying, Web. <https://ncees.org/licensure/number-licensees-state/>

Since most top 500 design firms provide a mix of engineering, architecture, and construction services,¹ and many provide land survey and geotechnical services as well, information on licensing for allied professions is included in the resource guide at the end of this paper.

When Are Licenses Needed?

All 50 states require professional engineers to be licensed before offering engineering services to the public, and 37 states require firm licenses as well. All licensing requirements must be met before advertising, submitting bids, or performing engineering services, including consulting.

The types of projects that require oversight by a licensed engineer vary by specialty and by state, but only a licensed engineer may prepare, seal, and submit engineering plans and drawings to a public authority for approval, or seal engineering work for public and private clients. In some states, requirements depend on the scope of work, its intended use, or whether it will be paid for by public or private funds.²



"Top 500 Design Firms," Engineering News-Record, May 2016. Web. https://www.enr.com/toplists/2016_Top_500_Design_Firms1

There are some limited exemptions from license requirements for engineers who work for the federal government,³ public utilities, or in-house for a manufacturer or other business, but the exemptions are complex enough to warrant examination on a case-by-case basis.

Professional engineers and engineering firms have been cited by state licensing boards for using the term "engineer" on business cards, letterheads, resumes, websites, LinkedIn profiles, and other social media without an active license to practice in the state. Clearly, state licensing boards are serious about enforcing professional licensing requirements.

Further details on professional engineer and engineering firm licensing follow.

USE OF THE TERM "ENGINEER"



In December 2016, a North Carolina water tank and tower maintenance company submitted qualification documents regarding water tank maintenance services to an Alabama business. A company logo appeared on one of the documents that referred to "engineered tank services," but the company did not have an engineering firm license in Alabama. The state board issued a citation and levied \$1,400 in fines and fees against the company, which obtained an Alabama engineering license the following March.⁴

Professional Engineer Licenses

Each state board imposes its own professional standards for engineering licensure, but most are founded on the same basic steps: education, passage of professional exams administered by the [National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying®](#) (NCEES), experience, and application for licensure through a state engineering board.

Steps to becoming a Professional Engineer (PE) or Structural Engineer (SE)

Education: Professional engineer licensing typically begins with a four-year degree from a program certified by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). In 15 states, the board may waive the bachelor's degree requirement based on equivalent education and experience,⁵ but these requirements are significant, ranging from a doctoral degree in engineering to 15 years of professional experience.

Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) exam: Candidates typically must pass the written FE exam,⁶ which covers basic principles of engineering and in some cases elements of an engineering specialty. In some states, the FE exam requirement may be waived for equivalent experience or education, but again, the requirements are significant. For example, North Carolina requires 20 years of progressive experience to waive the FE exam.⁷

The NCEES provides FE tests in the following disciplines:

- Chemical
- Mechanical
- Industrial and Systems
- Civil
- Environmental
- Other Disciplines
- Electrical and Computer

Upon passage of the FE exam, the applicant may request certification as an engineer-in-training, or EIT. EITs must complete four years of qualifying experience, usually under supervision of a professional engineer.

WEBSITE ADVERTISING

In May 2017, the Florida Board of Professional Engineers found that a consulting company offered on its website a "full range of engineering services," but the firm did not have a Florida engineering firm license. The company was fined \$5,000 fine plus \$107 in administrative costs.

The board also found that the website of an unlicensed engineering and general contractors company stated that it was "a full service professional engineering firm working on residential and corporate projects." The board ordered the firm to cease offering engineering services and pay \$585 in administrative costs.⁸

Principles and Practice of Engineering (PE): Candidates must generally also pass the written PE exam, which tests an applicant's knowledge and skills in a specific discipline. The NCEES currently provides PE exams in the following specialties:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ➤ Agricultural and Biological | ➤ Environmental | ➤ Naval Architecture and Marine |
| ➤ Architectural Engineering | ➤ Fire Protection | ➤ Nuclear |
| ➤ Chemical | ➤ Industrial and Systems | ➤ Petroleum |
| ➤ Civil | ➤ Mechanical | ➤ Software |
| ➤ Control Systems | ➤ Metallurgical and Materials | ➤ Structural* |
| ➤ Electrical and Computer | ➤ Mining and Mineral Processing | |

***The Structural Engineering (SE) exam:** Due to the risks associated with engineering buildings, bridges, and other structures, states such as Hawaii and Illinois have introduced "practice acts" limiting the practice of structural engineering to licensed SEs.⁹ In other states, the SE designation is an additional specialty beyond PE and is required only for engineering certain types of structures. Some states have introduced "title acts" limiting use of the structural engineer title.^{10,11} To date, roughly ten states have introduced specific requirements for structural engineers. To help structural engineers working in states that license SEs separately from PEs, or any structural engineers who want to prepare for the most stringent state requirements, the NCEES administers this separate 16-hour SE exam.¹²

Application: Once these steps are complete, an aspiring engineer may apply to the state board of engineers for a license. State requirements vary, with some considering duration of residency within the state, references from licensed engineers, and various aspects of training and experience. Some states and localities require additional exams.

License Fees and Processing Times

Processing times range from four to eight weeks. Since licenses are usually approved during state licensing board meetings, the timing depends on the board's meeting schedule. Fees also vary, from just \$50 in Delaware to \$373 in Illinois. Fees typically include the application fee plus a fee for processing exam applications.

Reciprocal Registration - The NCEES Records Program

Engineers who want to register in multiple states can take advantage of streamlined registration through the [NCEES Records](#) program. The applicant submits all required documents to the NCEES to establish a record of qualifications, including college transcripts, exam results, employment verification, and professional references. Once a record is established, an "engineer by reciprocity" or "comity" application may be submitted to other participating states for approval, speeding the application process. The program covers all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories. Engineer by reciprocity application fees are similar to other state registration fees.

Renewal Requirements

Most states require license renewals every one to two years. In nearly every state, renewal is contingent on completion of continuing education credits. It's important to track renewal dates and plan ahead to ensure that education requirements and applications are completed in time for renewals. Access a detailed breakdown of [professional engineer](#) license requirements in each state.

Firm Licensing

Business Registrations and Firm Licenses

There are two layers of state regulation engineering firms must consider when launching operations in a new state: registering the business with the secretary of state (SOS) and licensing the firm with the state engineering board where required. In addition, other business licenses and permits may be required at the state and local levels depending on the firm's location and business activities.

Registering Your Business Entity With the State

Firms that want to begin operations outside of their home state of incorporation must register with the SOS. The SOS issues a certificate of authority allowing the firm to conduct business as an out-of-state or "foreign" firm. Firms must also appoint a registered agent to receive legal documents and periodically renew their registration by filing annual reports with the SOS.

To register as a foreign firm, firms will likely need to submit a certificate of good standing from their home state as part of the license application. This is a document issued by the state corporations division certifying that the firm has met all registration and reporting requirements of the SOS. In some cases, it also indicates whether the firm has paid applicable state fees and taxes.

If the firm's articles of incorporation do not include engineering, several states require submission of amended articles to include engineering.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY VS. CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION

A [certificate of authority](#) is issued by the secretary of state and authorizes a firm to do business within the state. A certificate of authorization is granted by the state engineering board and authorizes a firm to provide engineering services.

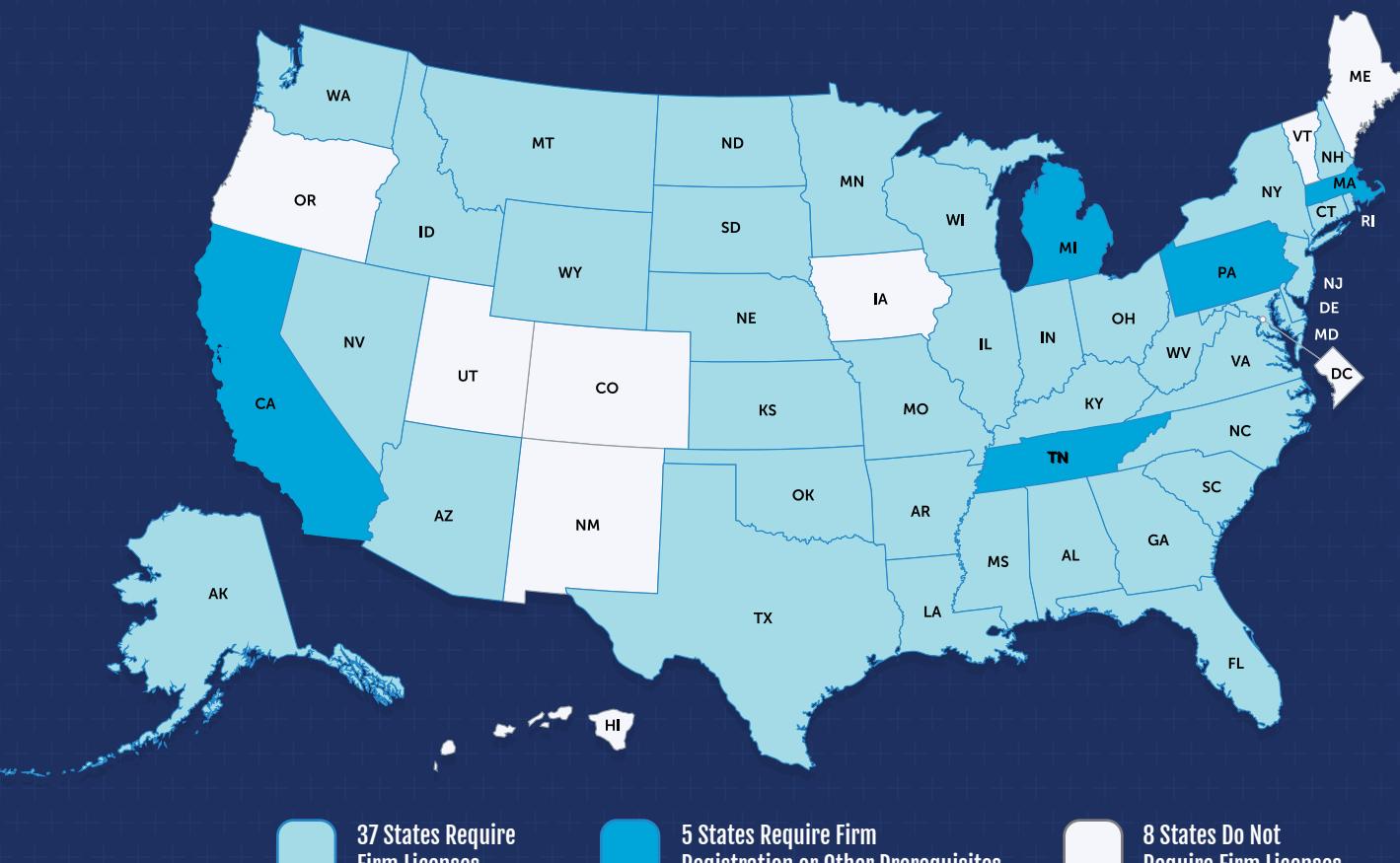
In Oklahoma and Missouri, the firm license is also called a certificate of authority, which sometimes creates confusion. The important thing to remember is that in all states, firms must register with the SOS; in 37 states, they must obtain a firm license from the professional licensing board; and in five more, they must register or satisfy similar requirements.

Licensing the Firm

In 37 states, firms must also apply to the state board of engineers for an engineering firm license, generally called a certificate of authorization. States that don't require engineering firm licenses include Colorado, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Vermont, plus the District of Columbia.

Five additional states impose requirements other than licensing such as registration, name approval, or other records to be filed. In California, firms must file an "organization record" following precise specifications, and every engineering branch office must also be registered under ownership of an engineer in responsible charge, which for some firms winds up being more complex than many state licenses. In Tennessee, firms must file a disclosure showing that a Tennessee-licensed engineer is in responsible charge. In Michigan, firms must receive prior approval from the state engineering board, while Pennsylvania firms must do so only if their names include "engineer" or "engineering." In Massachusetts, firms may need to file a regulatory board certificate with the SOS before forming a professional entity. In all, 42 states impose some license or registration requirement on engineering firms.

LICENSE AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ENGINEERING FIRMS



Order of Steps

Each state professional board has unique firm licensing requirements and a set process for completing the various steps. In states such as Florida, New York, North Carolina, Idaho, and New Hampshire, firms must receive approval from the state licensing board before registering with the SOS. In most states, however, the order is reversed, with firm licensing following SOS registration.



Potential Pitfall: The steps to licensure don't always follow the same order, so firms often wind up with a rejected application due to a missing prerequisite. Applications are approved at state board meetings, which may occur monthly or quarterly, leading to significant delays.



How to Avoid It: Make sure to review SOS requirements for new businesses alongside professional licensing board requirements for engineering firms before beginning any applications in a new state. This will prevent unnecessary delays and rejected filings.

Engineer in Responsible Charge

In all 50 states and the District of Columbia, a firm must have a licensed engineer on staff. Where firm licenses are required, the firm must appoint a licensed engineer in responsible charge for all services provided by the firm. In some states, if the firm has branch offices, those must be registered as well, and some may require an engineer in responsible charge for each branch location. Depending on the firm's operations, a designated engineer in charge may be required for mechanical, civil, electrical, structural, environmental, or other engineering specialty.



Potential Pitfall: It is easy to forget that the firm license is always dependent on the underlying professional engineer licenses. If a responsible engineer leaves the firm, the firm must notify the engineering board within a specified time frame and appoint a replacement. Failure to do so may lead to a lapsed firm license and loss of ability to do business in the state. Since professional licenses are usually filed under the engineer's home address, the firm may need to notify the board whenever an engineer in charge moves.



How to Avoid It: Set up a system to automatically notify whoever is managing firm licenses whenever key licensed staff move or leave the firm. Also be sure to track license renewal dates and keep professional licenses current, particularly for engineers in responsible charge.

WHEN THE RESIDENT ENGINEER LEAVES

A licensed engineering firm lost the Alabama-licensed engineer listed as the firm's principal for Alabama projects in October 2016. The firm did not update its records to appoint a new principal PE for Alabama projects until the following January. The state board found that the firm offered services from October through January without employing an Alabama licensed engineer. The firm was reprimanded and subjected to a \$1,000 fine.¹³



Corporate Structure

States also impose a wide range of requirements based on firm structure. For example, in Vermont, engineering firms must be formed as professional corporations (PCs) or professional limited liability companies (PLLCs), while in New Jersey, foreign engineering firms are barred from forming PCs. In Missouri, corporations must obtain a firm license, but partnerships do not need to. In Idaho, if a firm offers both engineering and land survey services, it must incorporate as a PC or PLLC.¹⁴ These requirements vary widely, so it's important to examine them in detail whenever firms are contemplating moving into a new state.

In several states, including Virginia, if the firm's articles of incorporation do not include a reference to engineering, they will need to be amended. In some states, North Carolina, for example, those amendments must be approved by the engineering board prior to filing. Firms may also be required to draft board resolutions or file resolutions following a board-approved template, as is the case in Alaska, as well as provide resumes of engineers in charge and company brochures specifying the firm's engineering services. Again, looking for these entity-level requirements will help avoid rejections and delays on the path to licensure.

Ownership and Management

Many states further impose management or ownership requirements on engineering firms. In New York, North Carolina, Florida, and Illinois, for example, the engineer in responsible charge must be an officer. In Georgia, all stockholders in a PC as well as one board member and the president must be a licensed engineer. In Idaho, all shareholders in a professional services corporation must be licensed design professionals.

In some cases, the requirements include engineers licensed in any state; others can be satisfied only by in-state licensees. For example, in Illinois, PCs and LLCs must be 100 percent-owned by Illinois-licensed professionals, and in New York, all partners must be licensed in New York State. In Vermont, all members and managers of an engineering PLLC must be licensed in Vermont.



Potential Pitfall: Because of these requirements, firms frequently find that they must adjust their ownership or management structure or even form a new entity when entering a new state, as many engineering firms are not owned solely by licensed professionals.



How to Avoid It: Review SOS and state board requirements before beginning any filings to avoid wasted time and money.

Name Requirements

In some states, if the firm name includes a reference to some form of “engineer” or “engineering,” special requirements must be met. As previously noted, such firms must register in Pennsylvania; in New York, firms that do not have a reference to “engineer” in their names may be required to file for a [fictitious name](#). In some cases, the name requirements depend on the number of licensed engineers in the firm.

Requirements also center on names of individual practitioners. For example, in California, individual names included in the company name must belong to a licensed professional currently or formerly active in the firm. In North Carolina and Nevada, the named individual must be licensed within that state.

Once again, it pays to review SOS and state board requirements in detail before beginning any filings in a new state.

Branch Offices

Many states require a licensed engineer in responsible charge for each branch office. In Arizona, firms must further register each location separately with the licensing board.



REGISTERING AND STAFFING BRANCH OFFICES

In 2015 the Kentucky State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors learned that an out-of-state firm listed a Louisville, Kentucky office on its website that wasn’t listed on the firm’s license. A board investigation found that the website listed a geotechnical engineer who was not licensed in the state as a licensed Kentucky professional engineer, and that the Louisville office was not staffed with a Kentucky-licensed professional engineer in responsible charge. The board further determined that the firm had started work on an engineering project before receiving its license from the board, and that the firm had issued two preliminary engineering reports signed by the unlicensed staffer under the title “geotechnical engineer” and with the designation PE. The firm received a reprimand, a \$9,000 fine, and an order to attend a professional ethics course in April 2017.¹⁵

A geotechnical consulting and engineering firm had a license to practice as a professional engineering firm with its principal place of business in Boca Raton, Florida. The company also had an active license in South Carolina. In March 2016, an employee from the firm’s Austin, Texas office applied for a temporary permit to practice engineering in South Carolina. The application indicated that the project was awarded to the firm in 2015 with services being performed by registered practitioners in their Greenville, South Carolina office. But the application listed the Austin office, which was not registered with the board, as the firm branch offering engineering services. The firm later registered the branch office in Austin, but received a reprimand and \$500 fine.¹⁶

Application Fees and Processing Times

The firm application may require copies of state registration or formation documents, notarized by-laws, names of licensed professionals, lists of officers and percentages of ownership, background checks, certificates of good standing, and annual reports.

Firm license fees range from \$0 in Georgia to \$600 in Alaska. The most common filing fee is \$100; the average is \$135.

Like professional engineer licenses, engineering firm licenses are approved at monthly or quarterly board meetings, so timing depends on the board's meeting schedule.

Turnaround typically ranges from four to eight weeks, but it can take much longer. In New York, for example, approval usually takes from three to five months.



Potential Pitfall: In some states, licensing might be relatively straightforward and fast, with approvals averaging a few weeks. In other jurisdictions, the process is anything but straightforward, which can lead to a frustrating cycle of rejection and resubmission, each dragging out approval by another 6-8 weeks. Without knowing the typical timeframes and preferences of each licensing board, it can be hard for in-house staff to get licenses in time to meet the sales team's goals.



How to Avoid It: Include licensing as an early step in sales and growth plans, and know how much time is typically required to file. This can prevent firms from having to put the brakes on their plans due to a licensing snag.

Design Firm Licenses

Some states, such as Illinois, combine engineering, architecture, and land surveying firm licenses into a single design firm application. Firms that combine these services may be able to file a single application, usually with a slightly higher fee. In addition, for firms offering design services, some ownership and management requirements may overlap. For example, in Nevada, for a corporation providing architecture and engineering services, two thirds of the ownership must be held by engineers or architects who are registered in Nevada.¹⁷



15 HOURS OF CE HAVE LONG-RANGING CONSEQUENCES

An Oregon engineer claimed that he had completed 15 hours of continuing education on a 2014 license renewal application in Texas. Upon finding that he had not completed the required hours, the Texas board fined him \$4,000. The engineer failed to pay the fine, and his license to practice in Texas was suspended.

In July 2016, the Oregon board discovered the unpaid fine and revoked the engineer's Oregon state license, with the condition that it could be restored within one year if full payment was made to the Texas board.¹⁸

Maintaining Business Licenses

Maintenance is required to ensure that existing firm and professional engineer licenses remain active wherever the company operates. This includes notifying the board and potentially the SOS whenever key information about the firm changes, ensuring that continuing education requirements are completed when required, and renewing firm licenses by state due dates.

Keeping Records up to Date: Firms must report any changes in ownership, name, address, or other relevant information to the engineering board and fill out a new certificate of authorization or change form, depending on the state. Many firms don't realize that before changing their firm name with the board, they must change their name with the SOS. Interestingly, in some states, this requires prior approval of the engineering board!

Continuing Education: Most states require continuing education to maintain active professional licenses, and by extension, any connected firm licenses.

Firm License Renewals: Most firm licenses must be renewed every one to two years. Be sure to review licenses on time, as a lapsed license generally costs more to reinstate and puts the firm at risk of unlicensed practice every day that it is inactive.

If the firm has been disciplined by any state licensing board, this must usually be disclosed in renewals. Failure to disclose discipline to other jurisdictions can result in license revocation.



STATE RENEWAL DEADLINES TRIP UP ENGINEER

A Minnesota engineer prepared to submit a license renewal to meet a July 1, 2016 deadline. But when she looked at her license information on the Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers (MNSPE) and National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) websites, she saw that her license was still current through December. She assumed that Minnesota had changed its licensing date to the end of the year.

In August, she saw that the Minnesota engineering board website indicated her license had lapsed on July 1. She emailed the board for clarification, believing it was an error. By the time she realized that her license had indeed expired, she had been working for 45 days with a lapsed license. She immediately sent a letter to the board, including a copy of her business card and email salutation referencing her PE title, as well as a copy of a fire inspection report she had prepared and signed during the lapse.

She received a \$1,000 penalty and reprimand for holding herself out as a PE and practicing professional engineering without a license.¹⁹

[State renewal deadlines](#) vary widely, with some deadlines following the firm's initial license date and others running on a fixed schedule set for all firms. For example, in Connecticut and Indiana, licenses renew annually on the anniversary of the firm's initial registration. In Alabama, licenses renew annually on January 31, while in Florida they renew biennially on February 28. In states such as Illinois and Virginia, licenses are renewed in odd years, while in some states, renewals are due in either odd or even years depending on the date of initial registration or, in the case of Kansas, based on where the firm's name falls alphabetically.



Potential Pitfall: License renewals do not fit neatly into a schedule, so they are ill-suited to management through calendar-based platforms or spreadsheets. For this reason, internal staff often struggle to maintain licenses due to a lack of proper tools.



How to Avoid It: Dedicated license management software makes this task a breeze. Where that is not available, setting up an automated system of reminders through a calendar system is a positive step.

Risks of License Errors

The fallout from licensing errors or gaps can be substantial. They include:

Lost Staff Time: Some state requirements are particularly complex, which can lead to delays for in-house licensing staff. A single error or missed prerequisite in these jurisdictions can lead to a frustrating cycle of resubmission and rejection. For example, one license specialist at an engineering company applied for a firm license in Illinois five times. When the license was finally approved, the employee couldn't find it in the state's system. By this point, the license was overdue by more than six months and the employee had invested more than a month of her time in the application.

Inability to Bid or Perform: When licenses are delayed in a new state, firms are forced to put bids on hold or risk bidding without a license. It is very frustrating, and not at all uncommon, for a firm to miss out on millions in opportunities due to lack of a \$150 engineering firm license. If a license lapses in the middle of a project or bid, the firm's ability to perform—and the entire project—may be jeopardized.

SUBMITTING BIDS ACROSS STATE LINES



In May 2016, the Alabama state board received a complaint that a metal building construction firm submitted a carport design for a location in Alabama bearing the sign and seal of a PE licensed in Georgia. A complaint to the board resulted in a citation, an order to cease providing plans without the seal and signature of an Alabama-licensed PE, and pay \$975 in penalties and fees.

In December 2016, the board fined another engineer who entered into an agreement with the City of Birmingham Water Works Board that included the offer to provide professional engineering services for all phases of the city's water systems. The board assessed a \$2,500 penalty and \$682 in administrative costs along with the order to cease offering unlicensed services in the state.²⁰

The Pennsylvania engineering board assessed a \$2,500 penalty against a New Hampshire PE for practicing in the commonwealth without a license. The board also placed a public reprimand on his permanent disciplinary record.²¹

Citations, Penalties, and Fees: Large and growing firms often become aware of license gaps when they receive citations. Unfortunately, a single citation sets off a chain of required disclosures and often reciprocal disciplinary action in other states. Penalties and fees can be substantial, and executives may be required to attend disciplinary hearings, compounding the expense.

License Revocation: Disciplinary actions may include license probation, suspension, or revocation. In some cases, if additional violations incur during a probation period, the firm may be permanently barred from working in that state. This can affect growth exponentially over the course of the business's lifespan and can even affect the business valuation for sale. A firm without the ability to do work in certain jurisdictions is hindering its potential.

Reputation Damage: Citations are a matter of public record, and often stay on the record perpetually. State engineering boards scrutinize these records and often restrict access to work in their states to ensure they are authorizing reputable, reliable firms that will adhere to their rules and regulations. Since many engineering boards publish disciplinary actions in their newsletters, competitors may use this information to cast doubt on the firm's reliability. Even a single lapse puts the firm's reputation at risk and may further damage the ability to pursue new business.

Penalties for a single violation can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars. By the time the discipline has been remediated, the costs and fines from just a handful of lapsed licenses can easily exceed the annual costs of maintaining licensing for the entire firm. In licensing, being short-sighted can have major long-term consequences.

Criminal Sanctions: States may pursue criminal sanctions against unlicensed firms, which usually leads to corresponding sanctions in other states.

RECIPROCAL DISCIPLINE



In 2017, the Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors discovered that a state-licensed PE had been disciplined by the Missouri engineering board and had subsequently surrendered his licenses in Kansas and Colorado. The board cited state law providing its right to impose discipline based on "[a]n offense in another jurisdiction resulting in revocation, suspension, or voluntary surrender." The engineer agreed to forfeit his Alabama PE license for two years.²²

The Kentucky State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (KYBOELS) learned in May 2017 that a Kentucky-licensed PE working from Pasadena, California had been disciplined by the California engineering board in January. Based on a review of that case, KYBOELS determined reciprocal disciplinary action was warranted. The engineer's Kentucky PE license was placed on probation until he completed all terms of probation of his California license. Additionally, he received a fine of \$1,000 for failing to disclose the California action on his Kentucky license renewal application.²³

Managing Licenses to Reduce Risks

Firms that manage licenses internally can take steps to reduce the risks of errors and oversights and minimize administrative burdens on operations.

- 1 Use appropriate software to track all professional and firm licenses and renewal dates throughout your entire operation.
- 2 Set up automated reminders of renewal dates and other important deadlines.
- 3 Include licensing as an early step in sales and growth plans.
- 4 Examine SOS and licensing board requirements side by side before beginning any applications.
- 5 Pay special attention to requirements concerning firm name, structure, branch locations, ownership, management, and professional engineer licenses.
- 6 Create a system to notify the license board immediately whenever key licensed professionals leave the firm or change addresses, possibly directly through payroll.
- 7 Include a means to notify the secretary of state and the engineering board if the firm changes its name or address or opens new branch offices.
- 8 Create a transition plan to ensure continuous licensing even if a specialist leaves. Cross-train staff, document license procedures, and provide shared access to all licensing resources.

From Obstacle to Asset: A Better Way to Manage Engineering Licenses

Firms that want to manage licenses proactively and be positioned to take advantage of growth opportunities as they arise should also evaluate outsourcing the work to a trusted partner such as Harbor Compliance. Because we specialize in licensing professional firms nationwide, we have the expertise, relationships with state officials, and tools to provide fast, reliable, and economical results. By taking advantage of our fully managed compliance solutions, you can:

- Enjoy unlimited access to our cloud-based, dedicated compliance software for effortless oversight
- Free up valuable staff time for more central tasks
- Say goodbye to the frustration and worry of navigating state websites, shuffling forms, and juggling deadlines
- Get up and bidding faster in new states as opportunities arise
- Protect your company's good reputation
- Avoid costly business disruptions and delays
- Ensure your ability to provide services for the long term

Engineering licenses elevate the profession, uphold standards, and protect the public. By taking a positive, proactive approach to licensing, firms can turn an unpredictable source of aggravation and expense into a solid investment that pays dividends long into the future.

Additional Resources

[Directory of Secretaries of States](#)

Engineering

[Guide to State License Requirements for Engineers and Firms](#)

[Directory of State Engineering License Boards](#)

[National Society for Professional Engineers](#)

[Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology](#)

[National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying](#)

[Engineering Accreditation Commission \(EAC\)](#)

Land Surveying

[Directory of State Land Survey License Boards](#)

[Guide to State Requirements for Land Surveyors and Surveying Firms](#)

Architecture

[Directory of State Architecture Licensing Boards](#)

[Guide to Architect Licensing](#)

[Guide to Architecture Firm Licensing](#)

Construction

[Guide to Construction Licensing](#)

[National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies](#)

Other Harbor Compliance White Papers



["Managing Business Licensing to Maximize Returns"](#) examines three cases of firms that turned a massive headache into an asset generating ROIs of 30X and up.



["Understanding Business License Compliance."](#) takes a closer look at general business license requirements.

End Notes

- 1 "Top 500 Design Firms," Engineering News-Record. May 2016. Web. https://www.enr.com/toplists/2016_Top_500_Design_Firms1
- 2 National Society of Professional Engineers, Web. <https://www.nspe.org/resources/licensure/what-pe>
- 3 "Licensure of Federal Engineers," National Society of Professional Engineers, Web. <https://www.nspe.org/resources/issues-and-advocacy/action-issues/licensure-federal-engineers>
- 4 Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. Web. http://216.226.125/pdf/publications/2017_2Quarter_Newsletter.pdf
- 5 "Education and Experience Requirements for the Professional Engineer," National Society of Professional Engineers, Web. March 2017. <https://www.nspe.org/sites/default/files/NSPE-Ed-Exper-Requirements.pdf>
- 6 "FE exam," National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying. Web. <https://ncees.org/engineering/fe/>
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