



INFORMATION SHEET

NO. G-01

DATE : October 16, 2018
CATEGORY : General
SUBJECT : **Signature on Plans**

SECTIONS INVOLVED

: Section 106A.3.2 San Francisco Building Code (SFBC); ASCE 7-10 Section 13.1.4 Exemption 6c; Professional Engineers Act; Architecture Practice Act; Rules and Regulations of the Board of Registration for Professional Engineer and the Board of Architectural Examiners; California Architects Board Building Official's Information Guide; California Business & Professions Code Sections 5537, 5538, 5800 and 6757.1

INTENT OF CODE : To require the signature of an Architect or Engineer on plans when required by State regulations.

INTERPRETATIONS : All plans, drawings, specifications, and calculations (hereafter referred to as drawings) submitted to the Department of Building Inspection (DBI) for permit issuance are required to be signed by the preparer and the preparer must be a California licensed architect, land surveyor, engineer, contractor or unlicensed designer for certain types of work as outlined herein. When such plans are not prepared by an architect, land surveyor, or an engineer, the Building Official may require the applicant submitting such plans or other data to demonstrate that the State law does not require that the plans be prepared by a licensed architect, land surveyor, or engineer. The Building Official may require plans, computations and specifications to be prepared and designed by an engineer, land surveyor, or architect licensed by the State to practice as such even if not required by State law (Section 106A.3.2 SFBC).

DISCUSSION :

(A) REQUIREMENTS FOR SIGNATURE ON PLANS:

When considering the requirements for signatures on drawings, the applications for building permits can be categorized into four (4) groups. The groups are determined by the type of work described on the application and drawings, by the building use or occupancy, by the materials of construction, by the span load carrying members, and by the dollar valuation as stated on the application. The four (4) groups are as follows:

- I. EXEMPT STATUS – The following types of applications are classed as exempt and any Building Designer, Interior Designer or unlicensed person may prepare and sign the drawings:
1. Single family dwellings of wood frame construction (Type V construction) not more than 2 stories and basement in height and with spans between bearing walls not exceeding 25 feet and the height does not exceed 25 feet; including alteration work to such buildings.
 2. Multiple dwellings containing no more than 4 dwelling units of wood construction not more than 2 stories and basement in height; including alteration work to such buildings. This shall not be construed as allowing an unlicensed person to design multiple clusters of up to 4 dwelling units. Design per conventional design per Chapter 23 of California Building Code (CBC).
 3. Store front installations, including entrance or exit doors, not affecting the structural system of the building and the dollar valuation of the installation do not exceed \$40,000.00.
 4. Fabric awnings and canopies.
 5. Signs that weigh less than 250 pounds are less than 24 square feet in area and projects less than 4 feet.
 6. Tenant space improvements in non-high rise buildings contained on one floor in non-residential occupancies where improvements do not exceed \$400,000.00 in valuation including the following:
 - a. Alterations involving the installation of interior wall and ceiling decorative materials.
 - b. Installation or relocation of interior non-load bearing partitions within the tenant space that are not fire rated.
 - c. Installation of new or relocation of existing doors (non-fire rated).
 - d. Installation of low partitions (not exceeding 5 feet – 9 inches high) and fixtures (rails, counters, cabinets and similar equipment attached or anchored to the building) which do not affect the structural system or safety of the building.
 - e. Installation of non-fire-rated suspended ceiling systems complying with ASTM Standard 635-04 and 636/C, 636M-06, except suspended ceiling systems used to provide lateral support for non-bearing walls and partitions.
 - f. HVAC systems not part of a smoke control system in an exempt building.
 7. Dwelling unit improvements contained within the space occupied by or serving an individual dwelling unit of an R-2 or R-3 occupancies in non-exempt buildings (see Items #1 and #2) as long as the estimated cost does not exceed \$150,000.00 in value per unit and is for the following types of work:
 - a. Window replacement
 - b. Existing kitchen and/or bathroom remodeling
 - c. Termite work that replaces non-structural members
 - d. Roof repairs of existing sheathing
 - e. Non-required insulation
 - f. Non-structural remodeling
 - g. Other non-structural remodeling work as long as the provisions for seismic design of SFBC Section 3401.10 are not triggered.
 8. Replacement in kind of non-structural building elements for non-exempt R-3 buildings when

the replacement is necessary for maintenance of the building or structure such as the replacement of the rear stairs from a two flat building.

9. Consult the San Francisco Fire Department for requirements regarding plan submittal for the installation or alteration of new and existing sprinkler systems and fire alarm systems.

Note: If any portion of any structure exempted by this section deviates from substantial compliance with conventional framing requirements for wood frame construction per California Building Code Section 2308, the Building Official shall require the preparation of plans, drawings, specifications, or calculations for that portion by, or under the responsible control of a licensed architect or registered engineer.

If an alteration to a non-exempt building involves any component that affects the structural system or safety of that building, as determined by the Building Official, all plans, documents and calculations for that alteration shall be prepared by a person licensed by the State.

Where it is required that documents be prepared by an architect or engineer, "The architect or engineer of record shall be responsible for reviewing and coordinating all submittal documents prepared by others, included deferred submittal documents, for compatibility with the design of the building."(SFBC Section 106A.3.4)

II. LICENSED CONTRACTOR – Any contractor holding a valid license from the State may perform the following:

1. Any action permitted in the Exempt Status section above.
2. A licensed contractor may provide any service permitted by Chapter 9 of the California Business and Professions Code. Those services may include the preparation of shop and field drawings for work which he or she has contracted or offered to perform, and designing systems and facilities which are necessary to the completion of contracting services which he or she has contracted or offered to perform.
3. Nothing in this section is intended to imply that a licensed contractor may design work which is to be installed by another person.

III. REGISTERED ENGINEER OR LICENSED ARCHITECT STATUS – A Civil Engineer or Architect licensed by the State of California shall prepare and sign all drawings for the following applications:

1. Any new building or structure with a structural steel frame or with floors, roof or walls constructed of concrete or masonry materials.
2. Any new building or structure having a clear span exceeding 25 feet.
3. Any new building or structure not covered by the "Exempt" or "Licensed Contractor" status and not limited by the "Special" status below.
4. Alteration work to existing buildings described in (1), (2) and (3) above, including tenant space improvement or dwelling unit improvements not covered by the "Exempt" or "Licensed Contractor" status.
5. Alteration work to existing buildings which includes removal of walls without replacement, such as open kitchen.
6. Suspended ceilings providing lateral support for walls and partitions.

7. Any building or structure or alteration thereto, which due to its complexity requires the submittal of technical information beyond the capabilities of the "Exempt" or "Licensed Contractor" status, as determined by the Building Official.

Note: Minor alterations to plans that do not alter the structural or safety components of the building may be made on plans by a person under the direction of the design professional. Permission for such actions should be given in the form of a letter or email addressed to the Department.

IV. SPECIAL STATUS - Specialized designs for portions or components of buildings or structures shall be prepared and signed by design professionals as required by the San Francisco Building Code and qualified by licensing agency to prepare such drawings, such as, but not limited to:

1. Engineered grading or foundation treatment
2. Retaining walls over 4 feet total height from the bottom of footing
3. Underpinning or Shoring
4. Rigid frames, trusses and other construction of structural steel or reinforced concrete
5. Special timber construction, such as trusses, stressed skin panels, glue laminated beams, columns and arches, etc.
6. Automatic fire sprinkler systems *
7. Smoke detection systems*
8. Alarm and communications systems *
9. Central control stations *
10. Emergency elevator operators
11. Smoke control systems*
12. Standby power systems
13. Emergency Electrical systems
14. Exit control systems
15. HVAC equipment (or other mechanical and electrical components) exceeding 400 pounds and mounted 4' or less above adjacent floor level (ASCE 7-10 Sec. 13.1.4 Exemption 6ci.)

(B) AFFIXING THE SIGNATURE OF AN ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER ON PLANS (OR CONTRACTOR, IF APPLICABLE) – Where it is required that documents be prepared by an architect or engineer (or contractor, if applicable), plans submitted for review shall be affixed with a signature and the professional seal with registration number (or contractor license number, if applicable) in the following manner:

1. All plans shall bear the signature and seal with registration number of the architect, land surveyor, or engineer (or contractor license number, if applicable). The plans shall be securely bound together and the first sheet shall have affixed an original signature. The remaining sheets may have a signature facsimile and professional seal with registration number (or contractor license number, if applicable). The first sheet shall have an index of all sheets.

*Consult with the San Francisco Fire Department for qualification requirements.

2. The stamp shall contain (a) the legend "State of California," (b) the term "licensed architect", or "registered professional engineer" (and branch), or "licensed land surveyor", (c) the name (as licensed with the Board), (d) the licensed number, and for architect only: (e) the expiration or renewal date of the license.

3. In the California State Board for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors Rules (16 CCR§411), the required seal on the plans shall be capable of leaving a permanent ink representation, an opaque and permanent impression, or an electronically-generated representation on the documents. The signature may be applied to the documents electronically. Preprinting of blank forms with the seal or signature, the use of decals of the seal or signature, or the use of a rubber stamp of the signature is prohibited.

(C) SHOP DRAWINGS – Shop drawings have not, from a historical perspective, formed a part of the design package necessary for procuring a permit. However, they are, more and more beginning to be incorporated into the building design package as the essential documentation describing that particular building function to be constructed. Typical submittals found today are glass fiber reinforced concrete, stone and precast wall panels, fire sprinkler systems, metal stairs, and glazed curtain wall systems. The Department of Building Inspection will accept shop drawing documents for these submittals on the condition that the principal Design Professional of Record accepts and retains the primary responsibility for the work indicated on the shop drawings.

The acceptance of this responsibility is acknowledged by the Department of Building Inspection in one of three ways. All shop drawings shall:

- (a) Be signed by the Design Professional of Record as required by SFBC Section 106A.3.4.1; or,
- (b) Bear a review stamp and be signed by the Design Professional of Record as in (a). These drawings must bear the Professional signature of the sub-contracting Design Professional that prepared the shop drawings; or,
- (c) Bear a review stamp and initials of the Design Professional of Record or his/her designated employee. A letter signed by the Design Professional of Record stating intent, purpose and extent of the shop drawing review is required. A designer's signature as required in (b) above for the sub-contracting Design Professional will also be required here. It is defined here that shop drawings submitted for plan check review are the design drawings and must be documented as such. The details of the building shall be confirmed by those of the shop drawings. Approval of shop drawings shall occur within the permit or addendum containing the work indicated by the shop drawings.

Tom C. Hui

02/16/18

Tom C. Hui, S.E., C.B.O.
 Director
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TH Date

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