

ARCHITECTURAL SEAL REQUIREMENTS

Excerpts from S.C. Board of Architectural Examiners, S.C. Architectural Registration Law, Title 40, Chapter 3

Section 40-3-320. Issuance of building permits.

The building official or other authority charged with the responsibility of issuing building or other similar permits of any county, municipality, or other subdivision, before issuing the permit, must be in possession of a sealed set of plans and specifications for which the seal of a registered architect is required and to verify that the architect who sealed the architectural plans and specifications is an architect registered in South Carolina. NOTE: The Firm Seal (COA – Certificate of Authorization) and Individual Seal must be on the plans.

Section 40-3-280 – Seal.

(A) Every architect and firm practicing in this State shall have a seal containing the name, the place of business, and the words “Registered Architect, State of South Carolina” with which they shall seal all drawings, prints, and specifications for use in their profession.

(B) The seal of the individual architect in responsible charge, as well as the seal of the firm, must appear on each print of the drawings and the index sheet, or sheets, of each set of specifications offered to secure a building permit and one record set for use on the construction site. The required seal identification may be a rubber stamp impression placed on original drawings and specification copy. The architect in responsible charge shall affix his signature over his seal. An electronic seal and signature may be used in lieu of an original seal and signature by applicable policy or regulation.

SECTION 40-3-290. Exceptions from coverage of chapter.

(A) Nothing in this chapter prohibits a general contractor or a home builder from the preparation and use of details and shop drawings, assembly or erection drawings, or graphic descriptions used to detail or illustrate a portion of the work required to construct the project in accordance with the plans and specifications prepared or to be prepared under the requirements of this chapter.

(B) Nothing in this chapter prevents or affects the practice of any other legally recognized profession.

(C) If the drawings and specifications are signed by the authors with the true title of their occupations, this chapter does not apply to the preparations of plans and specifications for:

- (1) a building which is to be used for farm purposes only;
- (2) a building less than three stories high and containing fewer than five thousand square feet of total floor area except buildings of assembly, institutional, educational, and hazardous occupancies as defined by the Standard Building Code, regardless of area;
- (3) a detached single-family or two-family dwelling, as defined in Group R3 of the Standard Building Code, regardless of size, with each unit having a grade level exit and sheds, storage buildings, and garages incidental to the dwelling;
- (4) alterations to a building to which this chapter does not apply, if the alterations do not increase the areas and capacities beyond the limits of this chapter or affect the structural safety of the building.

(D) Nothing in this chapter prevents or affects the practice of engineering, as defined in Chapter 22 of Title 40, or architectural work incidental to the practice of engineering.

For instances where there may be confusion regarding the language in other parts of this statute, the Board of Architectural Examiners provides the following guidance:

- **All buildings of assembly**, regardless of size, require the services of an architect. Assembly uses include, but are not limited to: movie theaters, banquet halls, nightclubs, restaurants, art galleries, churches, courtrooms, funeral parlors, libraries, museums, and stadiums.
- **All institutional buildings**, regardless of size, require the services of an architect. Institutional buildings include, but are not limited to: residential board and care facilities, assisted living facilities, halfway houses, group homes, congregate care facilities, social rehabilitation facilities, alcohol and drug centers, hospitals, nursing homes, mental hospitals, jails, adult care facilities, and day care facilities for more than five children younger than 2 1/2 years of age.
- **All educational facilities**, regardless of size, require the services of an architect. Educational facilities include day care facilities for more than five children older than 2 1/2 years of age.
- **All hazardous use facilities**, regardless of size, require the services of an architect.
- **Residential buildings that house more than two families** require the services of an Architect. Residential buildings include boarding houses, hotels, apartment houses, townhouses, convents, dormitories, fraternity/sorority houses, and monasteries.

Upfits and Alterations: Section 40-3-290(C)(4) is interpreted to mean that upfits or alterations to a building that is less than 5000 square feet and less than 3 stories in height do not require the services of an architect **unless** the alterations will increase the area of the building beyond 5000 square feet or affect the structural safety of the building. However:

- If either the building size or structural safety is affected by the alteration, the services of an architect are required.
- If the use of a building changes to become one of assembly, institutional, educational or hazardous occupancy, the services of an architect are required.
- Designs for alterations inside of a building that exceeds 5000 square feet must also be done by an architect. Example: a former warehouse (30,000 square feet) is now used for retail shops such as fast foods, gift shops, or personal services (tanning beds, manicure salons). Alterations to any one of these spaces require the services of an architect even though the retail space is less than 5000 square feet.

[The overall life/safety issues of the total building must be considered as a whole. The Board believes that piecemeal changes to individual business spaces, over time, may adversely affect the safety of the individuals who use the building. For this reason, an architect should coordinate the changes to the smaller retail space within the overall layout of the entire building. The same principle applies to strip shopping centers and malls where one of the retail spaces is being renovated for a new tenant.]

Resources

The South Carolina Architectural Registration Law may be found in its entirety online at www.llr.state.sc.us/pol/architects.

SC Board of Architectural Examiners Law and Regulation Reference Manual - http://www.llr.state.sc.us/pol/architects/PDF%20files/Board%20of%20Architects%20Law_Regulation%20booklet_03.pdf