



When Plans May Be Prepared by Unlicensed Individuals

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The California Building and Professions Code allows the design of certain building types to be prepared by unlicensed individuals or contractors as enumerated below. However, plans and specifications for such buildings must be prepared using appropriate architectural graphic standards by individuals that are knowledgeable and familiar with current code requirements for the buildings or components being designed. The plans must be of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature and extent of work proposed and show in detail that the work will conform to the provisions of the code and relevant laws, ordinances, rules and regulations. The City Building Official may require plans to be prepared by an appropriately licensed engineer or architect where the Building Official determines that plans are insufficient to show code compliance or when other special conditions exist.

1. Design by Unlicensed Individuals

- **Single-family dwellings** of not more than two stories and basement in height and constructed in accordance with conventional framing requirements of the California Residential Code (CRC). *B&P Code 6737.1*
- **Multiple dwellings** containing not more than four dwelling units of wood-frame construction of not more than two stories and basement in height, no more than four dwelling units per lot and constructed in accordance with conventional framing requirements of the California Building Code (CBC). *B&P Code 6737.1*
- **Garages** or other accessory structures appurtenant to the dwellings described above of wood-frame construction not more than two stores and basement in height and constructed in accordance with conventional framing requirements of the CRC. Examples include conventionally constructed residential decks, fences, storage buildings, sheds, playhouses, guest cottage, pool houses and other types of residential accessory structures. *B&P Code 6737.1.*
- **Agricultural and ranch** buildings of wood-frame construction not more than two stores and basement in height and constructed in accordance with conventional framing requirements of the CBC. *B&P Code 6737.1(a)(4)*
- **Non-structural and non-seismic store fronts**, interior alterations or interior additions, fixtures, cabinetwork, furniture, or other appliances or equipment, including any work necessary to install these items, or any non-structural and non-seismic alterations or additions to any building necessary to install these items that do not affect the safety of the building (as determined by the Building Official). *B&P Code 5538*

2. Design by Licensed Contractors

- All buildings mentioned in section 1 above for Unlicensed Individuals.
- Roof-mounted **Solar PV systems** installed by the designing contractor.
- New **electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems** or alterations or additions to such systems **for buildings listed above**¹ that do not affect the safety of the building [as determined by the Building Official]. *B&P Code 5538*
- New **electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems** or alterations or additions to such systems **for all other buildings** provided that the designing contractor installs the work and holds the required license to do so. A licensed contractor may not design work which is to be installed by another person unless the design is for a building listed in section 1 above. *B&P Code 6737.3.*

3. Design by Licensed Engineer or Architect

Building types not listed above require that the design be prepared by an appropriately licensed engineer or architect. Examples of buildings or structures that require design by an appropriately licensed engineer or architect include:

- Buildings utilizing non-conventional framing as described in the CBC or the CRC (i.e. carports, post and beam construction, steel construction, structures using concrete piers or post-tensioned concrete slabs, buildings with insufficient braced wall panels, etc.);
- Buildings of an unusual shape or size;
- Buildings constructed of other than light wood-frame conventional construction;
- Buildings more than two stories and basement in height;
- New non-residential buildings and nonresidential additions;
- Non-residential structural alterations;
- Non-residential electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems not designed and installed by appropriately licensed contractors¹;
- In-ground swimming pools
- Antenna towers
- Other structures or building elements when deemed necessary by the Building Official.

4. Compliance with CALGreen

Buildings subject to the green building requirements of CALGreen must include a CALGreen checklist prepared in collaboration with a City of Sonoma listed CALGreen Special Inspector. Listed CALGreen Special Inspectors can be found on the City's web site at <http://www.sonomacity.org/Government/Departmental-Offices/Building.aspx>.

5. Compliance with Disabled Access Requirements

The Building Department strongly encourages the use of a Certified Access Specialist (CASp) to help evaluate and determine accessibility compliance measures for all nonresidential alteration and addition projects that are subject to California accessibility requirements and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

¹ Electrical and mechanical systems for any building may be designed by an appropriately licensed electrical, mechanical or plumbing contractor, as long as that same contractor installs the system. *B&P Code 6737.3*