

## TENNESSEE BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL & ENGINEERING EXAMINERS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### APPLICATION QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))

*How long does it take the Board to process an application?*

Once an application is complete, it is sent to the Board members for review. The review process may take up to four (4) weeks. Architect and engineer applicants with a national council record may be eligible for an expedited review process, depending on their record status.

*How can I find out the status of my application?*

Architect, Landscape Architect and Interior Design applicants may contact Joyce Shrum at [joyce.shrum@tn.gov](mailto:joyce.shrum@tn.gov). Engineer Intern applicants may contact Cindy Toombs at [cynthia.toombs@tn.gov](mailto:cynthia.toombs@tn.gov). Engineer applicants may contact Wanda Phillips at [wanda.phillips@tn.gov](mailto:wanda.phillips@tn.gov). You may also call the Board office at 615-741-3221 or 800-256-5758.

*Do I need to complete the entire application if I have a national council record?*

Yes. All portions of the Tennessee application must be completed, including the experience section. Your experience listing does not need to be as detailed as what may appear in your council record. The following documents will be accepted from your council record: transcripts, references (provided that they meet our requirements and are less than two years old), and verifications of exam and registration information from other jurisdictions.

*I have a degree from a non-NAAB (National Architectural Accrediting Board) accredited architectural program. What is the procedure to have my education evaluated?*

Applicants with non-NAAB accredited architectural degrees must request an evaluation by Education Evaluation Services for Architects (EESA), which is administered by the NAAB. For further information regarding the evaluation process, contact EESA at the address below:

National Architectural Accrediting Board, Inc.  
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 410  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202-638-3372  
Website: [www.eesa-naab.org](http://www.eesa-naab.org)  
E-mail: [eesa@naab.org](mailto:eesa@naab.org)

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*I have a degree from a non-ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) accredited engineering program. What is the procedure to have my education evaluated?*

Applicants with non-ABET accredited foreign engineering degrees (with the exception of degrees accredited by the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board awarded in or after 1980) must request an evaluation by NCEES (National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying) Credentials Evaluations Services. For further information regarding the evaluation process, contact NCEES Credentials Evaluations Services at the address below:

P.O. Box 1686  
Clemson, SC 29633-1686  
Phone: 864-654-6824  
Website: [www.ncees.org/Credentials\\_evaluations.php](http://www.ncees.org/Credentials_evaluations.php)

Applicants with non-ABET accredited domestic engineering degrees will be evaluated by a former engineering professor on contract with the Board. The cost for such evaluations is \$50 per hour; an invoice for this service will be sent to applicants requiring an evaluation following receipt of the evaluation.

*I have a degree from a non-CIDA (Council for Interior Design Accreditation, formerly FIDER) accredited interior design program. What is the procedure to have my education evaluated?*

Applicants with non-CIDA accredited interior design degrees will be referred to the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) Alternate Education Review Program for an evaluation. NCIDQ will then send instructions and forms to the applicant, and evaluation fees will be paid to NCIDQ.

*How do I apply to sit for the Architect Registration Exam (ARE) before completing the Intern Development Program (IDP)?*

Interns wishing to sit for the ARE before completing IDP must file an exam application with the Tennessee Board and request that the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) transmit a record summary to the Board office confirming that they have enrolled in IDP. Applicants applying for early ARE eligibility must also submit a transcript. Your transcript(s) must be submitted directly to the Board office from each institution attended. Upon completion of IDP, a complete NCARB record must be transmitted to the Board and references must be submitted before registration may be granted.

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*How do I apply to sit for the Landscape Architect Registration Exam (LARE) before completing the required experience?*

Applicants wishing to sit for the LARE before completing the required experience must file an exam application with the Tennessee Board and submit a transcript to the Board office. Your transcript(s) must be submitted directly to the Board office from each institution attended. Upon completion of the required experience, references must be submitted and your experience record updated before registration may be granted.

*What is the procedure to register for the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) and Principles and Practice of Engineering (PE) exams?*

Applicants must first submit an application and application fee to the Tennessee Board office. Following approval to sit for the exam, applicants must register with the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) at [www.ncees.org](http://www.ncees.org) to pay the exam fees and schedule the exam.

*How are exam results reported to candidates?*

Architect and landscape architect exam results are available to candidates on the NCARB and CLARB websites, respectively.

Engineering exam candidates are notified by e-mail when their results are available on the NCEES website. PE exam candidates also receive a written notification of their results from the Board office. An engineer intern certificate is mailed to candidates who pass the FE exam.

*I am an engineer intern (engineer-in-training) in another jurisdiction, but I am now located in Tennessee. Do I need to apply for engineer intern certification in Tennessee?*

No. Engineer intern certification simply signifies that you have passed the national Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) examination. Since the FE exam is a nationally recognized exam, your engineer intern certification from another jurisdiction is recognized in Tennessee. When you apply for the Principles and Practice of Engineering (PE) exam, the Board will verify your engineer intern certification with the other jurisdiction.

### **COMPLAINT QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*How do I file a complaint?*

Complaints may be submitted on the Board's complaint form (available at <http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/complaint.shtml>) or in a written format that includes a description of the alleged violation and supporting documents. Complaints may be filed anonymously, although this is discouraged because it impedes the investigation. If you choose to file anonymously, we will still need the documentation that supports the allegation.

*What happens when I file a complaint?*

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When the Board receives your complaint, it will be initially reviewed to determine if there is a possibility of imminent danger to the health, safety and welfare to the public. If there is, then the complaint will be forwarded directly to the Board's legal counsel. If not, a copy of the complaint will then be sent to the respondent asking for his or her response within 14 business days. The complaint and the response will be forwarded to the Board's legal counsel for review. If additional information is necessary an investigation will be initiated. The Board's legal counsel will present the findings to the Board, which has the sole authority to determine the appropriate action. You will be notified of the Board's decision.

*Can the Board help me recover money or property?*

The Board cannot recover or order the refund of any money or property to which you may be entitled. You should consult with your own attorney about a lawsuit in these matters. In some cases, the Board may revoke or suspend the license of the person against whom you are complaining (the respondent).

*Is disciplinary action available to the public?*

Yes. Formal disciplinary actions are posted on the Board website and published in the Board's newsletter.

*Can I withdraw a complaint after filing it with the Board?*

Complaints may not be withdrawn after filing. Once a complaint is received in the Board office, it becomes the State's case and only the Board can dispose of the complaint. However, a request to withdraw a complaint may be considered by the Board in determining the appropriate action. Complainants are advised to bear these facts in mind before filing a complaint.

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*How many Professional Development Hours (PDHs) are required?*

- New registrants seeking renewal for the first time after initial registration must obtain 12 PDHs of continuing education during the two (2) years immediately following initial registration, seven (7) of which must address health, safety and welfare issues and technical competency.
- Registrants seeking renewal for each two-year period thereafter must obtain 24 PDHs of continuing education, 13 of which must address health, safety and welfare issues and technical competency. Carryover hours, not exceeding 12 PDHs, from the preceding renewal period may be included.

*How does the Board define health, safety and welfare?*

The Board has adopted policies defining "health, safety and welfare" for each profession. These policies are available on the policies page of the website (<http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/policies.shtml>).

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*What is a Professional Development Hour (PDH)?*

A PDH is defined as a contact (clock) hour consisting of not less than 50 minutes of instruction or presentation. Registrants will not receive credit for activities less than one (1) PDH in duration. One (1) Continuing Education Unit (CEU) is equal to 10 PDHs.

*Does the Board pre-approve continuing education courses or providers?*

No. It is the registrant's responsibility to determine which activities meet the criteria of the continuing education rules (which are available at <http://tn.gov/sos/rules/0120/0120.htm>).

*Do I need to send copies of my continuing education records with my renewal?*

No. Please do not send continuing education documentation unless we notify you that you have been selected for audit.

*How long do I need to retain my continuing education records?*

Continuing education records must be retained for a period of four (4) years, and copies must be furnished to the Board for audit verification purposes within thirty (30) days of the Board's request.

*What happens if the Board disallows my PDH credits?*

If you are selected for audit, and the Board disallows your claimed PDH credits, you will be given one hundred eighty (180) days to either substantiate the original claim or earn other credit to meet the minimum requirements.

### **FIRM DISCLOSURE QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*Who is required to file a firm disclosure?*

Tennessee does not license firms. However, any corporation, partnership or firm offering architectural, engineering or landscape architectural services to the public must file a firm disclosure form with the Board listing the names and addresses of all principals and officers, as well as the principals and officers duly registered to practice architecture, engineering or landscape architecture in Tennessee who are in responsible charge of such practice in this state. The firm disclosure forms are available at the Board's website.

*How does the Board define "principal"?*

A "principal" is considered to be an individual who has the authority to make independent design decisions. A principal is not required to be an officer in the firm.

*May I be in responsible charge of more than one firm?*

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A registrant may be in responsible charge of more than one firm only if the firms are at the same physical location.

*How often should I update my firm disclosure?*

Advise the Board, in writing, within 60 days of any address change. Submit a new firm disclosure if reporting any other changes such as a firm/company name change, changes in registration status of principals or officers, changes in principals or officers who are designated to be in responsible charge, etc.

*Do I need to submit a fee with the firm disclosure?*

No.

*Does my firm need to obtain a Certificate of Authority/Authorization?*

For information on Certificates of Authority, please contact the Department of State, Division of Business Services, at 615-741-2286, or by e-mail at [business.services@tn.gov](mailto:business.services@tn.gov). Certificates of Authority should not be submitted to the Board.

### **MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*Does Tennessee charge a fee for providing verifications of examination/registration to other states?*

No.

*How can I obtain a mailing list of registrants?*

Mailing lists are available at no cost at <http://tdcidata.tn.gov/default.aspx>. These lists include the name, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address, registration number, and registration expiration date. Customized lists are available for \$50.00 per profession; please contact the Board office for more information.

*Where can I obtain a seal?*

Seals may be obtained at most local office supply companies. The Board does not supply seals.

*How do I obtain a duplicate wall certificate?*

To replace a professional wall certificate (architects, engineers, landscape architects, and registered interior designers) send a written request to the Board accompanied by a fee of \$25.00. The cost for a duplicate engineer intern certificate is \$15.00.

*Can you refer me to a registered design professional in my area?*

Since the Board regulates the design professions, we may not refer business to registrants. Aside from the Yellow Pages, you could contact one of Tennessee's professional societies for assistance:

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American Institute of Architects (AIA) Tennessee  
P.O. Box 60128  
Nashville, TN 37206  
Phone: 615-255-3860  
E-mail: [ashley@aiatn.org](mailto:ashley@aiatn.org)  
Web: [www.aiatn.org](http://www.aiatn.org)

Tennessee Society of Professional Engineers (TSPE)  
800 Fort Negley Blvd.  
Nashville, TN 37203  
Phone: 615-242-2486  
E-mail: [ctoler@tnec.org](mailto:ctoler@tnec.org)  
Web: [www.tnspe.org](http://www.tnspe.org)

American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Tennessee Chapter  
E-mail: [tnasla@att.net](mailto:tnasla@att.net)

Tennessee Interior Design Coalition (TIDC)  
P.O. Box 150341  
Nashville, TN 37215  
E-mail: [contact@tndesigners.org](mailto:contact@tndesigners.org)  
Web: [www.tndesigners.org/](http://www.tndesigners.org/)

You may also download lists of registrants at <http://tdcidata.tn.gov/default.aspx>.

*How do I change my address?*

Please visit our address change page (<http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/chgAddress.shtml>), or update your address online at <https://apps.tn.gov/cirens/>.

*What is the professional privilege tax, and when is it due?*

Please visit our professional privilege tax page (<http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/pptax.shtml>).

*How do I subscribe to the Board's newsletter?*

If you would like to receive the newsletter electronically, please subscribe at [http://www.tn.gov/notify-app/sign\\_up.html?agencyId=3](http://www.tn.gov/notify-app/sign_up.html?agencyId=3).

*When and where does the Board meet?*

For information on meeting dates and locations, please visit the calendar page (<http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/calendar.shtml>). Meeting agendas and minutes are available at [http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/agenda\\_minutes.shtml](http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/agenda_minutes.shtml).

*Does my engineer intern (engineer-in-training) certification expire?*

No. Engineer intern certification simply signifies that you have passed the national Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) examination, and is valid indefinitely.

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*Do I need to be licensed by the Board of Architectural and Engineering Examiners to provide landscaping/lawn care services?*

The Board of Architectural and Engineering Examiners does not license landscaping/lawn care businesses or employees; these services are distinct from the practice of landscape architecture. In most cases, depending on the services you offer, you would just need to obtain a business license from your County Clerk. However, if you will be providing more extensive services, such as irrigation system installation, building retaining walls, etc., you might need a Contractor's or Home Improvement license. If you have any questions about those licenses, you may contact the Board for Licensing Contractors at [Contractors.Home-Improvement@TN.Gov](mailto:Contractors.Home-Improvement@TN.Gov), or by phone at 615-741-8307. Depending on the size and scope of the project, the design of certain structures may require a registered architect, engineer, or landscape architect. Additionally, if you will be applying pesticides or selling plants, you may need to obtain a license or certificate from the Department of Agriculture. You may contact the Department of Agriculture's Regulatory Services Division at 615-837-5150 for more information.

Another good resource is the small business Tennessee Smart Start Guide, which is available online at <http://www.tn.gov/e cd/bero/pdf/TNSmartStartGuide.pdf>.

### **PRACTICE QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*When is a registered design professional required?*

See the "Requirements for Building Design" page of this website (<http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/bldgDesReqs.shtml>).

*Are professional engineers licensed by discipline (civil, electrical, mechanical, etc.) in Tennessee?*

No. Engineers (as well as architects and landscape architects) are allowed to practice any discipline in which they are competent by reason of education and/or experience. A registrant may have expertise beyond the discipline in which he or she is educated and examined. The Rules of Professional Conduct state that registrants shall perform services only in their areas of competence. Registrants may be disciplined by the Board for practicing outside their areas of competence.

*Does the Board issue a temporary license?*

No.

*Does the Board allow the use of electronic seals and signatures?*

Yes. Rule 0120-02-.08(8) allows the use of rubber-stamp, embossed, self-adhesive or electronically generated seals. The registrant may also affix an electronically generated signature and date of signature to documents, provided that the registrant uses a secure method of affixation and does not authorize any other person to so affix the signature and date.

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*Does a set of plans sealed and signed by an architect, engineer or landscape architect registered in a state other than Tennessee meet the requirements for submittal in Tennessee?*

No. Only design professionals holding active Tennessee registration may submit plans and specifications for review to building departments and local planning and engineering offices.

*May a Tennessee registrant affix his seal and signature to plans and specifications prepared by an out-of-state design professional for submittal in Tennessee?*

No. A Tennessee registrant may only apply his professional seal, signature and date of signature to those plans and specifications that were prepared by him or under his responsible charge.

*How does the Board define "responsible charge"?*

"Responsible charge" is defined in rule 0120-02-.08(6). The rules of the Board are available at <http://www.tn.gov/sos/rules/0120/0120.htm>.

*Where can I find out which building, fire and handicapped codes are in effect in Tennessee?*

The State Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for adopting the minimum statewide building, fire and handicapped codes. Any questions relating to codes and plans review for occupancies subject to their review should be directed to that office. They can be contacted at 615-741-7190, or you may visit their website at <http://www.tn.gov/fire/index.shtml>.

*May any person provide inspection or review of buildings or sites to determine if the project construction phase conforms to the architectural and engineering construction documents?*

Yes. However, the Board recommends that a registrant of the Board provide construction administration or review of construction. Administration of construction contracts is defined as periodic site visits, change orders, shop drawing reviews, and reports to owners of any observed substantial deviation from the contract documents. Building officials who inspect for conformance with building codes are in no way restricted from performing their duties.

*What is the Board's position on the use of prototypical plans?*

The substantial portion of any project sealed by an architect, engineer or landscape architect should be developed under his or her responsibility. The use of pre-drawn detail items or detail units by a registrant who has reviewed and accepted same, as long as the health, safety and welfare of the public are protected, is allowed.

*How long are registrants required to retain plans?*

The Board's law and rules do not address this issue. However, the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) recommends that drawings, specifications, studies and

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reports be retained indefinitely due to their importance and the fact that they represent the final product on most jobs. If this is not possible, then NSPE recommends that they be retained at least until the statute of repose has passed. A statute of repose bars actions against registered design professionals after a specified period of time following the completion of services or the substantial completion of construction. In Tennessee, the statute of repose is four (4) years (T.C.A. § 28-3-202).

*For additional questions and answers regarding professional practice, refer to the Reference Manual for Building Officials and Design Professionals.*

### **REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*For information on registration requirements, click on "Registration Requirements" under the appropriate profession in the "Licensee/Applicant Resources" section of the home page.*

### **REGISTRATION STATUS QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*For information on changing your registration status, visit the Registration Status Changes page (<http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/statuschanges.shtml>).*

### **RENEWAL QUESTIONS ([Return To Top](#))**

*When does my registration come up for renewal?*

Tennessee licenses are renewed every two years. New licenses come up for renewal two years from the original month of licensure. You may utilize the online license roster search (<http://verify.tn.gov/>) to find your registration expiration date.

*I will be renewing my registration after the expiration date because I am completing my Professional Development Hours (PDHs) during the six-month "grace period." Can I still practice my profession during this period?*

No. If you are using the six-month renewal window to complete the required PDHs, you cannot practice or offer to practice your profession during this period. Your registration is expired and will not be renewed until the education requirement is met. Registrants not renewing within six months of the registration expiration date must reapply for registration.

*Are inactive and retired registrants still required to renew their registrations?*

Yes. Registrants on inactive or retired status are still required to renew their registrations every two years. While inactive registrants are exempt from the professional privilege tax and the continuing education requirement, they are still required to pay the \$140 biennial renewal fee and submit a properly completed renewal of registration form. Retired registrants do not have to pay the renewal fee or report continuing education, but they must still submit a properly completed renewal form.

*Can I renew online?*

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Yes. Online renewal is available at <https://apps.tn.gov/cirens/>. Online renewal instructions are available at <http://tn.gov/regboards/ae/documents/ONLINERENEWALINSTRUCTIONS.pdf>.

*Why does the online renewal system tell me that I am not eligible to complete my license renewal online because there is a deficiency and staff processing is required?*

This message appears because the renewal is considered pending until reviewed by office staff. If all requirements are met, the license is renewed within two business days. You will be notified if any outstanding deficiencies need to be addressed.

*Do I need to renew my engineer intern certification?*

No. The engineer intern certification simply signifies that you have passed the national Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) examination and does not expire.