



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
Land Use and Environmental Services Agency
Code Enforcement

June 8, 2005

Department Policy: requests for Architect or Engineer seals on project documentation

1. Background

Code Enforcement Trade Inspectors periodically incur field conditions which necessitate a NC Licensed Professional's opinion regarding the code compliance of a particular building element or system. Typical examples of this include:

- Questionable soil conditions
- Deviations from structural plans
- Serviceability, soundness or structural stability of existing building components.

This policy reviews the position on use of seals of both the NC Board of Architecture and NC Board of Engineering and outlines Department criteria for professional seal requests in the future.

2. NC Board of Architecture rules on use of professional seals

An Architect must seal, sign and date the architectural components of the construction documents; that is, the architectural sheets as well as the specifications prepared by the Architect. However, thereafter an Architect would only seal documents that are significant revisions to plans (reissued sheets, reissued spec sections, etc). An Architect shall not generally seal letters clarifying construction conditions or letters of verification; an Architect's signature on such documents shall be sufficient.

- Source: Cathe Evans, NC Board of Architecture, 919-733-9544
- Reference Board rule 21 NCAC 02.0206 Requirement for and use of Professional Seal

3. NC Board of Engineering and Land Surveying rules on use of professional seals

Any work, including letters, produced by a duly licensed NC Engineer, which expresses any engineering opinion, recommendation or work product, requires a seal and signature. (Board Rules 21-56.1103 (a) & (b)). Revisions should be noted and dated and if not made by the person who sealed the drawings must be sealed as to the revisions separately. (Board Rule 21-56.1103 (a)(7)). Where this work is mixed in with work by others (such as on record drawings), the Engineer should include a statement (or disclaimer) delineating his/her part of the work. (Board Rule 21-56.0701(c)(3))

- Source: David Tuttle, NC Board of Engineering and Land Surveying, 919-791-2000-X111

4. Department policy

- Any letter or drawing from an Engineer, representing his/her work, must be signed and sealed.
- Architects do not seal verification letters, and should not be requested to do so.
- Architects do not seal clarifying drawings, unless they are completely re-issued sheets or spec sections.

Appendix

Selected questions/answers regarding professional seals

1. On use of the Architect's seal.

- 1.1 Q: On letters by an Architect attesting to field conditions or verifying the built product, should a seal be requested of or provided by the Architect?
A: An Architect's seal should not be placed on such documents.
- 1.2 Q: So an Architect should not be asked and should not seal meeting notes, documentation of phone conversations, explanations of what the construction drawings mean, or final verification statements.
A: Correct.
- 1.3 Q: If an Architect does sketches which clarify the construction documents, but do not change the scope, must they be sealed?
A: If the scope of work or intent of the design doesn't change, or if health safety and welfare (HSW) does not change, a seal is not necessary.
- 1.4 Q: If an Architect submits an amendment to a sealed set of drawings, is a new seal required?
A: If the amendment changes the project scope or affects HSW, a new seal is required.
- 1.5 Q: If a revision is made to the original documents by the original seal holder on the same sheet, which does not change the project scope, is a new seal required?
A: If the Architect uses a revision block or key along with clouding, dating the change, that revision block sufficiently identifies the change, provided that the original document is sealed.
- 1.6 Q: If a revision to the construction documents requires a whole sheet or spec section to be reissued, must the reissued item receive a new seal and signature?
A: Yes.
- 1.7 Q: At what point does a change to specs require a new seal?
A: If the change alters existing wording or text, it would not need to be sealed. However, if the change added an entire new section or changed a section so significantly that it required reissuing, it must be signed and sealed.
- 1.8 Q: Should an Architect seal reference drawings included in their construction documents?
A: No. An Architect should not seal drawings that they have not prepared or have not been responsible for preparation of same. Simply inserting reference drawings or reports does not require them to be sealed by the Architect.
- 1.9 Q: Should an Architect be required to seal work by other professional disciplines, such as Electrical, Fire, Mechanical, etc?
A: No. An Architect seals only her/his Architectural work.

2. On use of the Engineer's seal.

- 2.1 Q: On letters by an Engineer attesting to field conditions or verifying the built product, should a seal be requested of or provided by the Engineer?
A: Yes. An Engineer should seal such a letter if it represents his work product, including evaluating or attesting to field conditions.
- 2.2 Q: Should one ask an Engineer to seal as-built or record drawings.
A: The Engineer shall seal record drawings if she/he issues them, but should clearly indicate by disclaimer that work for which she/he is responsible or the basis or source of the record information.
- 2.3 Q: Should one ask an Engineer to seal field change instructions, orders or documents?
A: Yes. Again, an Engineer should seal such instructions or documents if they represent her/his work product.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Q: Define a "change in the project scope".
A: With respect to NC professional seal requirements, a revision would be considered a change to the project scope or scope of work, if:
- it is a change to the size, extent or nature of the work,
 - which is significant either in terms of scale, importance, or its consequence to the health safety and welfare of the building users or occupants.