

AELS ALASKA

Alaska State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors

2024 Newsletter



Message from the Chair

The AELS Board has accomplished several important milestones during the past year. We successfully updated our statutes through the passage of SB 126 in May 2023. Many thanks to Senator Bjorkman and the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee for sponsoring this legislation that cleaned up many outdated provisions. One specific change now allows the Board's Executive Administrator to approve straightforward comity applications, which results in faster authorization for licensure. The AELS Board has also been actively engaged in SB73, a bill to register interior designers. A motion made to approve adding interior designers to the AELS Board



Catherine Fritz AIA
AELS Board Chair

STAMPING FAQ

Q: As a licensed design professional, how do I know when something requires a stamp and signature?

A: Check out Alaska Statute 08.48.221 which requires that you stamp and sign technical documents when they are issued as final thus certifying that they were prepared under your responsible charge and that they are within your field of practice. Examples include drawings, specifications, surveys, plats, plates, reports, or similar documents.

failed during the May 2023 Board meeting. However, the Board suggested modifications to SB73 if the legislation proceeds. This bill will continue to be followed through the 2024 legislative session. In 2025, the AELS Board will undergo a sunset review by the legislative audit division. The audit report, along with other reports and testimony, is considered by the Legislature when determining if there is a continuing public need for the board.

The Board also facilitated several important regulation changes during the past year. One of these is the continuing education program that provides more options for completing the required 24 biennial professional development hours (PDHs). There is a new provision that allows registrants with more than 30 years of practice to complete a reduced number of PDHs (8 hours per biennial period). Outreach events and information on the AELS website are being provided to inform registrants of the new provisions.

Improving communication and coordination with state agencies has been one of the Board's ongoing priorities. The state fire marshal attended the May 2023 meeting to share information on permitting and inspection topics, and the Board formed a working group to interface with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation on wastewater disposal regulations.

All Board members are active participants in their respective professions, and many are serving in leadership roles with affiliated national organizations. I will be completing 8 years of service with the AELS Board in March 2024, as will my mining engineer colleague, Fred Wallis. It has been very gratifying to broaden my experience in public service, and to engage with so many dedicated and talented colleagues from around the state. I encourage all registrants to stay abreast of issues of your licensing board, and to consider applying for board service. The Board schedules at least one open public testimony period during each meeting, and the meetings are always available for you to listen and testify (when applicable) via Zoom

HSW FAQ

Q: Licensed design professionals are directed to stamp only designs that protect the health, safety, and welfare (HSW) of the public. How are these terms defined?

A: The AELS Board defines public health, safety, and welfare as follows:

Health: Aspects of professional practice that improve the physical, emotional, and social well-being of occupants, users, and any others affected by buildings, infrastructures, and sites.

Safety: Aspects of professional practice that protect occupants, users, and any others affected by buildings, infrastructures, or sites from harm.

Welfare: Aspects of professional practice that enable equitable access, elevate human experience, encourage social interaction, develop the wise use of resources, and benefit the built and natural environments.

Tips from the Board

Continuing Education:

New continuing education regulations for AELS went into effect on October 15th, 2023.

New options for earning PDHs which include the following:

- Outreach activities done by the registrant
- Courses that focus on ethics or business-related activities (up to 8 PDHs)
- Structured self-study in the subject for which the registrant holds a registration (up to 4 PDHs)
- Peer reviewing papers, articles, and books

PDH hours no longer all have to be health, safety and welfare related, however they must be related to the professionals' scope of practice.

Balancing out these new options, you are no longer allowed to carry forward excess PDH hours to the next renewal period.

Definitions for these new options are found in 12 AAC 36.550.

There is also a new Continuing Education Log and Continuing Education Structured Report available on the AELS Continuing Education webpage to assist with tracking and documenting your PDHs. These are invaluable if you are selected for an audit.

Reduction for Seasoned Professionals Individuals that have been licensed for 30 or more years in a NCEES, NCARB, or CLARB recognized jurisdiction are only required to obtain 8 PDHs per biennial period.

Reminder: Do not check the box attesting to having finished the required 24 hours of continuing education if they have not been completed. If registrants have not completed their required 24 PDHs, they will need to take advantage of the following two options that AELS offers:

- 1) On or before December 31, 2023, submit a paper renewal application with the extra \$50 extension fee requesting a 30-day extension. On January 1, 2024, the registration will be put into the "Inactive" status at which time the registrant has until January 31, 2024, to complete their 24 PDHs and submit their documentation to aelsboard@alaska.gov. The registrant should not practice until their registration has been placed back into "Active" status.; or
- 2) Let the registration lapse on December 31, 2023. Immediately complete the 24 required PDHs. Then submit the 2024-2025 renewal application, enter the date the hours were completed on page 2 and pay the additional \$50 delayed renewal penalty.

This past legislative session design professionals scored a victory when SB126 passed the Legislature and was signed into law by Governor Dunleavy. This legislation was requested by the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors and updates outdated portions of statutes without making substantive changes.

One change clarifies that electrical and mechanical engineers may serve on the Board at the same time. This could be helpful because after civil engineering, these two disciplines have the second and third most registrants in Alaska.

Another change clarifies that a registrant who seals and signs a document must do the work or be in responsible charge of it **and** the work must be in the registrant's field of practice. This aligns the law with how the professions have long practiced and how regulations are written.

The bill also provides numerous edits and updates to the statutes, adds two new definitions, eliminates duplication, transfers some provisions to regulation, acknowledges that documents are now transmitted electronically, and the Board no longer administers exams, and adds limited partnerships to the corporate entities that can be issued certification for professional practice. A registrant who wants to see more detail may request the sectional analysis from Board staff.

We are grateful to the Legislature for being willing to tackle legislation important to our professions and give a special shoutout to Senator Jesse Bjorkman and his Labor & Commerce Committee aide, Laura Achee, for their yeoman's work in sponsoring this bill and shepherding it through the Legislature.

Loren Leman, P.E.
Chair, Legislative Liaison Committee
AELS Board

SB126 Becomes Law



SB126 signing with Governor Mike Dunleavy, Senator Jesse Bjorkman, DEC Commissioner Jason Brune, and AELS Board Members Bob Bell, Loren Leman, Jeff Garness

Tips from the Board

Common Types of Licensing Violations

Over the past 5 years, the AELS Board has handled 184 cases dealing with potential violations.

Not all cases result in an investigation, and of those, not all result in discipline. Cases also represent allegations that were unsubstantiated or cases closed with non-disciplinary letters.

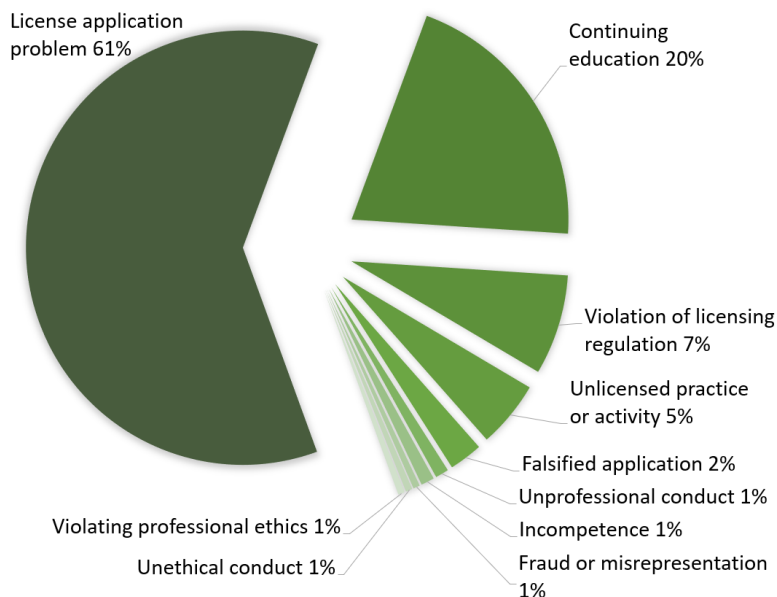
The three most common cases (not necessarily violations) are continuing education issues, licensing application problems (or falsified applications), and violations of licensing regulations.

Licensing application problems or falsified applications refer to applications that are referred to investigations, due to a disclosure on an application, which are reviewed for proper disclosure and to confirm there are no additional violations of statutes and regulations. These cases make up 128 of the identified cases.

With regard to continuing education, cases are primarily a result of a failure to complete the required 24 PDHs, which presents itself in licensing audits. These cases make up 41 of the identified cases.

The third category, 'violation of licensing regulations,' constitutes a category that encompasses unspecified violations. These could be things from improper use of seals, specific violations of municipal codes related to professional work, or violations related to the assignment of a person in responsible charge. Because of the varied nature of these cases and their varying fact patterns it is hard to present a specific precautionary narrative to give registrants. Discipline can vary greatly for violations of this nature depending on the severity of the offense and other compounding/mitigating factors. These cases constitute 15 of the identified cases.

COMMON LICENSING VIOLATIONS



COA FAQ

Q: When is a Certificate of Authorization (COA) required?

A: Any corporation, Limited liability corporation, limited liability partnership, or limited partnership that offers architectural, engineering, land surveying, or landscape architectural services must have a COA before practicing or offering to practice in Alaska. See AS 08.48.241 for more detail.

Getting Involved with the Board:

How to make board business YOUR business

The Alaska State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors exists to protect the public interest through regulation of the professions in AS 08.48. While you may only think about the board when it's time to renew your license, there are many ways to engage with the board—and many reasons why you might want to do so:

Why should I engage with board business?

The board meets at least quarterly to discuss matters related to practice, licensure, and enforcement of its laws. Every topic the board considers relates to professional practice, including continuing education, sealing, alignment with national standards, and responsible charge, to name a few.

When these topics arise, the board deliberates and often proposes regulation projects to codify intended changes. Feedback from registrants has a profound effect on the outcome of these projects, which ultimately affects the daily professional work of registrants.

How can I engage in board business?

The simplest way to begin is by listening in to a board meeting or a meeting of a committee of the board. These are all published on the board's [web page](#) and in the state's [Online Public Notice System](#).

If you are seeking to serve on a deeper level, board membership is an exciting responsibility. Board members must be fair and impartial, willing to dig deep into the details and thoughtfully explore all angles of an issue. Members are appointed by the governor and serve up to two four-year terms. The AELS board has four new board members joining the board on March 1, 2024 - Architect - Paul Barril, Civil Engineer - Colin Maynard, Land Surveyor - Brad Rinckey, and Mining Engineer - John Barry.

Regulatory boards differ vastly from non-profit or corporate boards, so please reach out if you're interested in learning more. When you are ready to apply, the governor's [Office of Boards and Commissions](#) can assist. We'd love to welcome you to the toughest job you'll ever love.

Sara Chambers, DCCED Boards and Regulations Advisor



AELS Board Information

Upcoming Board Meeting Schedule

May 8 - 9

August 23 - 24

Upcoming Exam Dates

NCEES SE Exam:

April 16 - 17

October 9 - 10

AKLS Exam

April 19

Upcoming Application Deadlines

April 9

July 24

Registration applications must be received 30 days before AELS Board meeting or processing will be delayed until the next meeting.

Contact Info

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