



PRACTICE ADVISORY

ISSUED FOR BUILDING PERMIT DOCUMENTS

Version 1.0, Published October 29, 2020

This practice advisory has been issued to inform registrants of Engineers and Geoscientists BC (engineering professionals) of the standard of practice regarding the completeness of sealed plans and supporting documents (collectively referred to in this advisory as “Plans”) from an Engineer of Record (EOR) for a building permit application. This practice advisory summarizes the results of a disciplinary decision issued to an engineering professional in March 2019 that confirms the standard for the completeness of Plans, in particular structural designs, submitted by an EOR for a building permit application.

Plans submitted to an Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) in support of an application for a building permit must substantially comply with the *British Columbia Building Code (BCBC)*, the Vancouver Building By-law (VBBL), the *National Building Code of Canada (NBC)*, and other applicable enactments respecting safety (except for construction safety aspects) (collectively referred to in this advisory as “the Codes”), and must contain sufficient detail to enable the design to be checked by another engineering professional to establish conformance to the Codes.

The submission of an incomplete design as part of a permit application exposes multiple parties to various types of risks, and may be considered evidence of unprofessional conduct.

BACKGROUND

In March 2019, the association’s Discipline Committee Panel (“the Panel”) determined that an engineering professional had demonstrated unprofessional conduct when submitting structural Plans in support of a building permit application that were materially incomplete and contained deficiencies for the purpose of “getting into the queue” for a building permit.

The Panel that heard the case found that the structural Plans omitted material information; in particular, the Plans depicted incomplete load paths and incomplete beam, joist, and column sizing, and they lacked foundation details and roof-framing details. The Panel accepted expert evidence that the structural drawings were only 50 to 75 percent complete. The Panel also found that, contrary to Section 2.2.4.3(1)(c) of Division C, Part 2 of the *BCBC*, the structural Plans did not contain the dimensions, location, and sizes of all structural members in sufficient detail to enable the design to be checked.

Submission of incomplete Plans as part of a building permit application exposes multiple parties to various types of risks, especially in the following situations:

- AHJ staff assume that Plans submitted by an EOR substantially comply with the applicable Codes, as stated on the related letter of assurance issued by the EOR, and on that basis the AHJ issues a building permit.
- An EOR provides incomplete Plans for a building permit application with the clear intention of preparing compliant Plans prior to construction, but the EOR dies, becomes incapacitated, or is otherwise removed from the project and compliant designs are never prepared after the building permit is issued.
- After a project is constructed, the AHJ is required to investigate the constructed design to assess building performance issues, assess other risks to public safety, and retain the Plans for the future reference of owners or project professionals, but the filed Plans that were provided to the AHJ do not reflect the design that was actually constructed.

STANDARD OF PRACTICE

The standard of practice for the submission of engineering Plans to an AHJ by an EOR in support of an application for a building permit requires that the engineering Plans:

- a) be complete for their intended purpose;
- b) substantially comply with the Codes and other applicable enactments respecting safety (except for construction safety aspects);
- c) contain “sufficient detail to enable the design to be checked” by another engineer for conformance to the Codes (as noted expressly for the structural discipline in Section 2.2.4.3(1)(c) of Division C, Part 2 of the *BCBC*, and as interpreted in the association’s *Quality Management Guidelines – Documented Independent Review of Structural Designs*);
- d) be appropriately checked, with records of the checks performed retained for a minimum of 10 years; and
- e) be authenticated by the EOR by applying their seal complete with signature and date.

It should be noted that the type of “checking” that may be conducted by an AHJ in its permitting process should be distinguished and not confused with the checking that engineering professionals are required to undertake for their engineering work. Any check or review that an AHJ conducts will not relieve the EOR of the professional obligation to ensure appropriate documented checks and independent reviews are carried out in accordance with the association’s Bylaw requirements.

It is not permissible for an EOR to submit incomplete Plans for a building permit application in order to secure a place in the administrative queue with the intention of providing a more complete version of the documents at a later date. Any design documents submitted to an AHJ must substantially comply with the applicable Codes.

However, an EOR may submit design documents for permitting purposes that are marked as “Issued for Permitting Purposes,” along with the following statement:

This submission is provided for permitting purposes. For construction, refer to the Issued for Construction version of these plans and supporting documents.

In such event, the EOR must issue the “Issued for Construction” version of the documents to their client prior to construction. Both the “Issued for Permitting Purposes” and “Issued for Construction” versions of the Plans are expected to substantially comply with the applicable Codes.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

For further information, see the association’s web pages for Quality Management Guidelines (egbc.ca/quality-management-guidelines) and Discipline Notices (egbc.ca/Complaints-Discipline/Discipline-Notices).

Engineers and Geoscientists BC. 2018a. Quality Management Guidelines: Documented Independent Review of Structural Designs. Version 1.4. Burnaby, BC: Engineers and Geoscientists BC. [accessed: 2020 Jul 16]. <https://www.egbc.ca/Practice-Resources/Quality-Management-Guidelines>.

VERSION HISTORY

| VERSION NUMBER | PUBLISHED DATE | DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES |
|----------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1.0 | October 29, 2020 | Initial version. |

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