



When and Why do I Need a Design Professional (Architect or Engineer)

What is a design professional, and when is one required to design, prepare and certify plans?

A design professional is licensed or certified by the Minnesota Board of [Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design \(AELSLAGID\)](#) to practice their respective disciplines. Plans must be prepared and certified by a design professional unless specifically exempted in state licensing rules. The building code authorizes the building official to require plans to be prepared by a design professional for an exempt building if special conditions exist.

See rules from the [Minnesota Board of AELSLAGID](#).

A permit application must include plans and specifications for the project with the name and address of who prepared the plans. Plans must provide information that clearly shows that the project design complies with the building code and other laws and ordinances that apply to the project. The plan preparer must certify that reasonable care has been given to compliance with applicable laws, ordinances, and building codes.

The requirement for quality and completeness of plans and associated documents is the same whether they have been prepared by a design professional or not. You may want to consider working with design professionals who can assist with planning and designing the project while incorporating code requirements and preparing construction documents for contractors and for submittal with your permit application.

Generally, Minnesota Rules do not require a licensed design professional for the following projects:

- One- and two-family dwellings and townhouses.
- Residential accessory structures such as garages with footings at least 5 feet below grade or which are less than 1,500 square feet on pre-approved standard engineered slab.
- Temporary buildings or sheds used exclusively for construction purposes, not exceeding two stories in height, and not used for living quarters.
- Apartments and condominiums, 3 units or less.
- Dwellings, lodging houses, attached single family dwellings, townhouses, and congregate residences (each accommodating 10 persons or less).
- Business uses which are not greater than two stories with a basement and not greater than 2,250 gross square feet.
- Retail uses which are not greater than two stories with a basement and not greater than 1,500 gross square feet.
- Assembly uses intended for dining and drinking with an occupant load of less than 50 people, providing seating for not more than 20 people and not greater than 1,000 gross square feet.
- Low hazard factory industrial uses which are not greater than one story with no basement and not greater than 3,000 gross square feet.
- Aircraft hangars and helistops not greater than one story with no basement and not greater than 3,000 gross square feet.
- Storage for non-combustible materials and products which are not greater than one story with no basement and not greater than 5,000 gross square feet. Open or enclosed parking garages are not exempted.
- Farm buildings, carports, greenhouses, sheds, and stables not greater than one story with no basement and not greater than 1,000 gross square feet and, tanks, towers, fences not over 6 feet high, and retaining walls with 4 feet or less of vertical exposed face.