

CHAPTER 544C

REGISTERED INTERIOR DESIGNERS

Referred to in §10A.506, 669.14

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544C.1 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#), unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “*Board*” means the interior design examining board established pursuant to [this chapter](#).
2. “*Building equipment*” means any mechanical, plumbing, electrical, or structural components, including a conveyance, designed for or located in a building or structure.
3. “*Conveyance*” means an elevator, dumbwaiter, vertical reciprocating conveyor, escalator, or other motorized vertical transportation system.
4. “*Department*” means the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing.
5. “*Direct supervision and responsible charge*” means a registered interior designer’s personal supervisory control of work of which the registered interior designer has detailed professional knowledge. In respect to preparing interior technical submissions, “*direct supervision and responsible charge*” means that the registered interior designer has the exercising, directing, guiding, and restraining power over the preparation of the interior technical submission, and exercises professional judgment in all matters embodied in the interior technical submission. “*Direct supervision and responsible charge*” does not mean reviewing the interior technical submission prepared by another person unless the reviewer actually exercises supervision and control and is in responsible charge of the interior technical submission.
6. “*Interior alteration or construction project*” means a project for an interior space or area within a proposed or existing building or structure, including construction, modification, renovation, rehabilitation, or historic preservation, that involves changing or altering any of the following:
 - a. The design function or layout of rooms.
 - b. The state of permanent fixtures or equipment.
7. “*Interior nonstructural element*” means an interior design element that does not require structural bracing and that is not load-bearing according to adopted code.
8. “*Interior technical submission*” means a design, drawing, specification, study, or other technical report or calculation that establishes the scope of an interior alteration or construction project including a description of standards.
9. a. “*Registered interior design*” means the design of interior spaces as a part of an interior alteration or construction project including the preparation of interior technical submissions relating to space planning, finish materials, furnishings, fixtures, and equipment, and the preparation of documents relating to interior construction that does not affect the engineered systems of a building. “*Registered interior design*” includes all of the following:
 - (1) Programming, planning, pre-design analysis, and conceptual design of interior

nonstructural elements, including but not limited to the selection of materials, furniture, fixtures, and equipment, but not building equipment.

(2) Alteration or construction of interior nonstructural elements and any interior technical submissions related to such alteration or construction.

(3) Preparation of a physical plan of space within a proposed or existing building or structure including all of the following:

(a) Determinations of circulation systems or patterns.

(b) Determinations of the location of exit requirements based on occupancy loads.

(c) Assessment and analysis of interior safety factors to comply with building codes related to interior nonstructural elements.

(4) Application of building codes, fire codes, and accessibility standards, including but not limited to the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable to interior technical submissions for interior nonstructural elements.

(5) Rendering of designs, plans, drawings, specifications, contract documents, or other interior technical submissions and administration of interior nonstructural element construction and contracts relating to nonstructural elements in interior alteration or construction of a proposed or existing building or structure.

b. “Registered interior design” does not include any of the following:

(1) Services that constitute the practice of professional engineering or professional architecture, except as otherwise provided in [this chapter](#).

(2) The making of changes or additions to any of the following:

(a) The structural system of a building, including changing the building’s live or dead load on the structural system.

(b) The building envelope, including exterior walls, exterior wall coverings, exterior wall openings, exterior windows and doors, architectural trim, balconies and similar projections, bay and oriel windows, roof assemblies and rooftop structures, and glass and glazing for exterior use in both vertical and sloped applications in buildings and structures.

(c) The mechanical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, ventilation, electrical, vertical transportation, fire sprinkler, or fire alarm systems.

(d) Means of egress systems, except for the exit access component.

(e) Construction that materially affects life safety systems pertaining to fire safety of structural elements or the fire protection of structural elements, smoke evacuation and compartmentalization systems, or fire-rated vertical shafts in multi-story structures.

(f) Changes of building use to occupancies not already allowed by the current building.

(g) The construction classification of the building or structure according to the international building code.

10. “Registered interior designer” means a person registered under [this chapter](#).

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §2](#); [2006 Acts, ch 1177, §45](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §1699](#); [2023 Acts, ch 20, §1, 2](#); [2023 Acts, ch 119, §45](#)

Section amended and editorially internally renumbered

544C.2 Establishment of interior design examining board.

1. An interior design examining board is established within the department. The board consists of seven members: five members who are interior designers who are registered under [this chapter](#) and who have been in the active practice of registered interior design for not less than five years, the last two of which shall have been in Iowa; and two members who are not registered under [this chapter](#) and who shall represent the general public. Members shall be appointed by the governor subject to confirmation by the senate.

2. Professional associations or societies composed of interior designers may recommend the names of potential board members to the governor, but the governor is not bound by the recommendations. A board member is not required to be a member of any professional association or society composed of registered interior designers.

3. Appointments shall be for three-year terms and shall commence and end as provided in [section 69.19](#). Vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term by appointment of the governor

and shall require senate confirmation. Members shall serve no more than three terms or nine years, whichever is less.

2005 Acts, ch 104, §3; 2006 Acts, ch 1177, §46; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1700; 2023 Acts, ch 20, §3

Confirmation, see §2.32

See Code editor's note on simple harmonization at the beginning of this Code volume

Subsection 1 amended

544C.3 Duties of the board.

1. The duties of the board shall include, but are not limited to, all of the following:
 - a. Administering and enforcing [this chapter](#).
 - b. Establishing requirements for the examination, education, and practical training of applicants for registration.
 - c. Holding meetings each year for the purpose of transacting business pertaining to the affairs of the board. Action at a meeting shall not be taken without the affirmative votes of a majority of members of the board.
 - d. Adopting rules under [chapter 17A](#) necessary for the proper performance of its duties. The rules shall include provisions addressing conflicts of interest and full disclosure, including sources of compensation.
 - e. Establishing fees for registration as a registered interior designer, renewal of registration, reinstatement of registration, and for other activities of the board pertaining to its duties. The fees shall be sufficient to defray the costs of administering [this chapter](#), and shall be deposited in the licensing and regulation fund created in [section 10A.507](#).
 - f. Maintaining records, which are open to public inspection at all reasonable times, of its proceedings relating to the issuance, refusal, renewal, suspension, and revocation of registration. The records shall also contain a roster indicating the name, place of business and residence, and the date and registration number of every registrant.

2. The director of the department shall provide staff to assist the board in the implementation of [this chapter](#).

2005 Acts, ch 104, §4; 2006 Acts, ch 1177, §47; 2012 Acts, ch 1023, §157; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1701; 2023 Acts, ch 108, §48

Subsection 1, paragraph e amended

Subsection 2 amended

544C.4 Expenses — compensation.

The members of the board are entitled to be reimbursed for the actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties within the limits of the funds appropriated to the board. Each member of the board may also be eligible to receive compensation as provided in [section 7E.6](#).

2005 Acts, ch 104, §5

544C.5 Qualifications for registration.

Each applicant for registration must meet the interior design education and practical training requirements adopted by rule by the board, and have passed an examination prescribed by the board that is task-oriented, focused on public safety, and validated by a recognized testing agency. The department shall register an individual who submits an application to the board on the form and in the manner prescribed by the board as a registered interior designer if the individual satisfies the following requirements:

1. Submits written proof that the individual has successfully passed the national council for interior design qualification examination, or its equivalent.
2. Has completed any of the following:
 - a. Four years of interior design education plus two years of full-time work experience in registered interior design.
 - b. Three years of interior design education plus three years of full-time work experience in registered interior design.
 - c. Two years of interior design education plus four years of full-time work experience in registered interior design.

3. Submits the required registration fee to the board.

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §6](#); [2006 Acts, ch 1177, §48](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §1702](#); [2023 Acts, ch 20, §4](#)
Referred to in [§544C.7](#)

Unnumbered paragraph 1 amended
Subsection 2, paragraphs a, b, and c amended

544C.6 Reciprocal registration.

The board may also grant registration by reciprocity. An applicant applying to the board for registration by reciprocity shall furnish satisfactory evidence that the applicant meets both of the following requirements:

1. Holds a valid registration or license issued by another registration authority recognized by the board, where the qualifications for registration or licensure were substantially equivalent to those prescribed in this state on the date of original registration or licensure with the other registration authority.

2. Holds a current certificate number issued by the national council for interior design qualification.

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §7](#)

Referred to in [§544C.7](#)

544C.7 Registration issuance.

When an applicant has complied with the qualifications for registration in [section 544C.5](#) or [544C.6](#) to the satisfaction of a majority of the members of the board and has paid the fees prescribed by the board, the board shall enroll the applicant's name and address in the roster of registered interior designers and issue to the applicant a registration certificate, signed by the officers of the board. The certificate shall entitle the applicant to use the title "registered interior designer" in this state.

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §8](#)

544C.8 Continuing education.

A registered interior designer shall, at the time of application for renewal of a certificate of registration, submit proof of completion of continuing education requirements established by rules adopted by the board.

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §9](#)

544C.9 Revocation, suspension, and nonissuance of registration.

1. The board may revoke, suspend, or refuse to issue or renew the registration of any person upon a finding of any of the following:

a. Fraud in obtaining or renewing a certificate of registration.

b. Professional incompetency.

c. Knowingly making misleading, deceptive, untrue, or fraudulent representations in the practice of the registrant's profession or engaging in unethical conduct or practice harmful or detrimental to the public. Proof of actual injury need not be established.

d. Conviction of a felony related to the profession or occupation of the registrant. A copy of the record of conviction or plea of guilty shall be conclusive evidence of the conviction.

e. Unlawful use of the title of "registered interior designer".

f. Willful or repeated violations of the provisions of [this chapter](#) or a rule adopted under [this chapter](#).

2. Any person may appeal a finding of the board within thirty days of the date of notification of action. Upon appeal, the board shall schedule a hearing in accordance with [chapter 17A](#).

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §10](#)

544C.10 Unlawful use of title of "registered interior designer" — violations — penalty — consent agreement.

1. It is unlawful for a person to use the title, or aid or abet a person in using the title, of "registered interior designer" or any title or device indicating that the person is a registered interior designer unless the person has been issued a certificate of registration as provided

in [this chapter](#). [This section](#) does not prohibit the provision of interior design services, or the use of the terms “interior design” or “interior designer”, by an architect or by a person who is not registered as an interior designer.

2. A person who violates [this section](#) is guilty of a simple misdemeanor. The board, in its discretion and in lieu of prosecuting a first offense under [this section](#), may enter into a consent agreement with a violator, or with a person guilty of aiding or abetting a violator, which acknowledges the violation and the violator’s agreement to refrain from any further violations.

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §11](#)

544C.11 Injunction.

In addition to any other remedies, and on the petition of the board, any person violating [this chapter](#) may be restrained and permanently enjoined from committing or continuing the violations.

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §12](#)

544C.12 Scope of chapter.

[This chapter](#) does not apply to the following:

1. A person licensed to practice architecture pursuant to the laws of this state.
2. A person licensed as a professional engineer pursuant to the laws of this state.
3. A person who performs the following services: selling, selecting, or assisting in selecting personal property used in connection with furnishings of interior spaces or fixtures such as, but not limited to, furnishings, decorative accessories, furniture, paint, wall coverings, window treatments, floor coverings, cabinets, countertops, surface-mounted lighting, or decorative materials for a retail sale; or installing or coordinating installations as a part of the prospective retail sale, or providing computer-aided or other drawings for the purpose of retail sale if the drawings are used for material listed for retail sale; and who does not represent that the person is a registered interior designer.
4. A person engaged in an activity traditionally performed by an interior designer, including a professional service limited to the planning, design, and implementation of kitchen and bathroom spaces or the specification of products for kitchen and bathroom areas, in a noncommercial setting.
5. A person not registered under [this chapter](#) acting under the instruction, control, or supervision of a registered interior designer, or a person executing the plans of a registered interior designer, provided that such a person shall not be in charge of interior technical submissions.

[2005 Acts, ch 104, §13; 2023 Acts, ch 20, §5](#)

NEW subsections 4 and 5

544C.13 Transition provisions. Repealed by 2023 Acts, ch 20, §9.

544C.14 Registered interior designers — stamp and seal.

1. A registered interior designer shall have a seal with which to identify all interior technical submissions issued by the registered interior designer for use in this state. The seal shall be of a design, content, and size prescribed by the board. A registered interior designer shall only sign and seal an interior technical submission within the scope of registered interior design.

2. Interior technical submissions prepared by a registered interior designer, or under a registered interior designer’s direct supervision and responsible charge, shall be stamped with the impression of the registered interior designer’s seal. A registered interior designer shall not impress the registered interior designer’s seal on an interior technical submission if the registered interior designer was not the author of the interior technical submission or if interior technical submission was not prepared under the registered interior designer’s direct supervision and responsible charge.

3. A registered interior designer may sign and seal an interior technical submission covering the scope of the registered interior design and shall have the authority to submit

such interior technical submission to a state or local governmental entity for the purpose of obtaining any requisite permit for an interior alteration or construction project.

4. The placement of the registered interior designer's signature and seal shall indicate the document or part thereof for which the seal applies. The seal and date may be affixed electronically. The registered interior designer may provide, at the sole discretion of the registered interior designer, an original signature in the handwriting of the registered interior designer, a scanned copy of the document bearing an original signature, or a computer-generated signature.

5. A registered interior designer shall not affix, or permit to be affixed, the registration number, seal, or signature of the registered interior designer to any interior technical submission that the registered interior designer is not competent to perform.

6. A registered interior designer shall not sign and seal an interior technical submission that was not prepared by the registered interior designer or under the direct supervision and responsible charge of the registered interior designer.

[2023 Acts, ch 20, §6](#)

Referred to in [§544C.15, 544C.16](#)

NEW section

544C.15 Registered interior designer stamp and seal — conflicts of interest — penalties.

1. A person shall not intentionally do any of the following:

a. Affix the signature or seal of a registered interior designer to any interior technical submission without the permission of the registered interior designer.

b. Use or attempt to use the interior design registration or seal of another except as provided in [section 544C.14](#).

c. Impersonate a registered interior designer.

d. Obtain or attempt to obtain registration from the board by fraud.

e. Make any willfully false oath or affirmation to the board.

f. As a registered interior designer, accept compensation from a client in connection with a registered interior design project, except as payment for the provision of registered interior design services, which would reasonably appear to compromise the registered interior designer's professional judgment in serving the best interests of the client or public.

2. A person who intentionally violates a provision of [subsection 1](#) is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

3. A registered interior designer shall avoid conflicts of interest.

a. If an unavoidable conflict of interests arises, a registered interior designer shall do all of the following:

(1) Immediately inform the client or employer of all circumstances that may interfere with or impair the obligation of the registered interior designer to provide professional services.

(2) Notify the client or employer and withdraw from employment at any time when it is not possible to faithfully discharge the responsibilities and duties owed to the client or employer.

b. If an unavoidable conflict of interest arises, a registered interior designer shall not do any of the following:

(1) Agree to perform professional registered interior design services for a client or employer if the registered interior designer has a significant financial or other interest that would impair or interfere with the responsibility of the registered interior designer to faithfully discharge professional interior design services on behalf of the client or employer.

(2) Accept payment from any party other than a client or employer for a particular project and not have any direct or indirect financial interest in a service or phase of a service to be provided as part of a project unless the client or employer approves of the conflict.

(3) Solicit or accept anything of value from material or equipment suppliers in return for specifying or endorsing a product.

(4) Violate the confidences of a client or employer except as otherwise required by law.

(5) Perform services for a client or employer while a full-time employee of another employer without notifying all parties concerned.

4. [This section](#) shall not limit the professional responsibility of a registered interior

designer to an owner of a project when the registered interior designer is employed by a person under contract to engage in interior design practice for that project.

[2023 Acts, ch 20, §7](#)

NEW section

544C.16 Submission of interior technical submissions.

1. A registered interior designer may sign and seal an interior technical submission that is required for an interior alteration or construction project and that shall be kept as a public record.

2. If a political subdivision of the state requires a seal or stamp on an interior technical submission that is submitted for an interior alteration or construction project, the political subdivision shall accept an interior technical submission impressed with the seal or stamp of a registered interior designer consistent with the provisions of [section 544C.14](#).

[2023 Acts, ch 20, §8](#)

NEW section