

CHAPTER 8
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OF LICENSEES

[Prior to 11/14/01, see 193C—Chapter 4]

193C—8.1(542B) General statement. In order to establish and maintain a high standard of integrity, skills and practice in the professions of engineering and land surveying, and to safeguard the life, health, property and welfare of the public, the following code of professional conduct is binding upon every person holding a certificate of licensure as a professional engineer or professional land surveyor in this state. The code of professional conduct is an exercise of the police power vested in the board by the Acts of the legislature.

[ARC 7671C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

193C—8.2(542B) Code of professional conduct. All persons licensed under Iowa Code chapter 542B are charged with having knowledge of the existence of this code of professional conduct and are expected to be familiar with its provisions, to understand them, and to abide by them. Such knowledge includes the understanding that the practices of engineering and land surveying are a privilege, as opposed to a right, and the licensee shall be forthright and candid in statements or written response to the board or its representatives on matters pertaining to professional conduct.

8.2(1) Responsibility to the public. Licensees will conduct their professional practices in a manner that will protect life, health and property and enhance the public welfare. If their professional judgment is overruled under circumstances where safety, health and welfare of the public are endangered, they shall inform their employer or client of the possible consequences, notify such other proper authority as may be appropriate, and withdraw from further services on the project.

Licensees may neither approve nor certify engineering or land surveying documents that may be harmful to the public health and welfare and that are not in conformity with accepted engineering or land surveying standards.

8.2(2) Competency for assignments. Licensees may perform engineering or land surveying assignments only when qualified by education or experience in the specific technical field of professional engineering or professional land surveying involved. Licensees shall engage experts or advise that experts and specialists be engaged whenever the client's or employer's interests are best served by such service.

Licensees may accept an assignment on a project requiring education or experience outside their field of competence, but only to the extent that their services are restricted to those phases of the project in which they are qualified.

8.2(3) Truth in reports and testimony. Licensees, when serving as expert or technical witnesses before any court, commission, or other tribunal, may express an opinion only when it is founded upon adequate knowledge of the facts in issue, upon a background of technical competence in the subject matter, and upon honest conviction of the accuracy and propriety of their testimony. Under these circumstances, the licensee must disclose inadequate knowledge.

Licensees shall be objective and truthful in all professional reports, statements or testimony. All relevant and pertinent information shall be included in such reports, statements or testimony. Licensees shall avoid the use of statements containing a material misrepresentation of fact or omitting a material fact.

8.2(4) Conflict of interest. Licensees shall:

a. Not issue statements, criticisms or arguments on engineering or land surveying matters connected with public policy that are influenced or paid for by an interested party, or parties, unless they have prefaced their comments by explicitly identifying themselves, by disclosing the identities of the party or parties on whose behalf they are speaking, and by revealing the existence of any pecuniary interest.

b. Avoid all known conflicts of interest with their employers or clients and, when unforeseen conflicts arise, shall promptly inform their employers or clients of any business association, interest, or circumstances that could influence judgment or the quality of services.

c. Not accept compensation, financial or otherwise, from more than one party for services on the same project, unless the circumstances are fully disclosed and agreed to by all interested parties.

d. Act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees and maintain full confidentiality on all matters in which the welfare of the public is not endangered.

8.2(5) Ethics. Licensees shall conduct their business and professional practices of engineering and land surveying in an ethical manner. In addition to the provisions of this chapter, the board will consider, although not necessarily be bound by, the ethical standards that address public protection issues adopted by a recognized state or national engineering or land surveying organization, such as the National Society of Professional Engineers or the National Society of Professional Surveyors.

8.2(6) Unethical or illegal conduct.

a. *Business practices.* Licensees shall not:

(1) Pay or offer to pay, either directly or indirectly, any commission, percentage, brokerage fee, political contribution, gift, or other consideration to secure work, except to a bona fide employee or bona fide, established commercial or marketing agency retained by them or to secure positions through employment agencies.

(2) Engage in any discriminatory practice prohibited by law and shall, in the conduct of their business, employ personnel upon the basis of merit.

(3) Solicit or accept gratuities, directly or indirectly, from contractors, their agents, or other parties dealing with their clients or employers in connection with work for which they are responsible.

(4) Solicit or accept an engineering or land surveying contract from a governmental body when a principal or officer of the licensee's organization serves as an elected, appointed, voting or nonvoting member of the same governmental body that is letting the contract. For purposes of this subparagraph, "governmental body" means a board, council, commission, or similar multimembered body. A licensee would not violate this provision, however, if the principal or officer of the licensee's organization who serves as a member of the governmental body plays no role in the solicitation or acceptance of the contract, and the contract would be legally permissible under applicable Iowa law, including but not limited to Iowa Code sections 68B.3, 279.7A, 331.342, and 362.5.

(5) Associate with, or permit the use of their names or firms in a business venture by, any person or firm that they know, or have reason to believe, is engaging in business or professional practice of a fraudulent or dishonest nature.

(6) Misrepresent pertinent facts concerning employers, employees, associates, firms, joint ventures, or past accomplishments in brochures or other presentations incident to the solicitation of employment.

b. *Individual professional conduct.* Licensees shall not:

(1) Use association with nonengineers, corporations or partnerships as "cloaks" for unethical acts.

(2) Violate any local, state or federal criminal law in the conduct of professional practice.

(3) Violate licensure laws of any state or territory.

(4) Affix their signatures or seals to any plans, plats or documents dealing with subject matter in which those licensees lack competence, nor to any plan, plat or document not prepared under their direct personal direction and control.

(5) Falsify their qualifications or permit misrepresentation of their or their associates' qualifications. They shall not misrepresent or exaggerate their responsibility in or for the subject matter of prior assignments.

c. *Real property inspection reports.* Licensees shall not:

(1) Represent themselves as licensed professional land surveyors or professional engineers on real property inspection reports (e.g., mortgage surveys).

(2) Place their firm names, logos, or title blocks on real property inspection reports (e.g., mortgage surveys).

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193C—8.3(542B) Reporting of acts or omissions. Licensees shall report acts or omissions by a licensee that constitute negligence or carelessness. For the purposes of these rules, "negligence or carelessness"

means demonstrating unreasonable lack of skill in the performance of engineering or land surveying services by failure of a licensee to maintain a reasonable standard of care in the licensee's practice of engineering or land surveying. In the evaluation of reported acts or omissions, the board determines if the engineer or land surveyor has applied learning, skill and ability in a manner consistent with the standards of the professions ordinarily possessed and practiced in the same profession at the same time. Standards referred to in the immediately preceding sentence shall include any minimum standards adopted by this board and any standards adopted by recognized national or state engineering or land surveying organizations.

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193C—8.4(542B) Standards of integrity. Licensees shall:

1. Answer all questions of a duly constituted investigative body of the state of Iowa concerning alleged violations by another person or firm.
2. Admit and accept their own errors and not distort or alter the facts to justify their own decisions when proven wrong.
3. Present information to the engineering and land surveying examining board in writing and cooperate with the board in furnishing further information or assistance required by the board, if a licensee knows or has reason to believe that another person or firm may be in violation of Iowa law or rules regarding ethics or conduct of professional engineering or professional land surveying practice.
4. Licensees cannot assist in the application of an individual they know is unqualified for licensure by reason of education, experience or character.

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193C—8.5(542B) Engineering and land surveying services offered by business entities.

8.5(1) Purpose of rule. The purpose of this rule is to protect the public from misleading or deceptive advertising by business entities that hold themselves out to the public as providing professional engineering or professional land surveying services and to guard against the unlicensed practice of professional engineering or professional land surveying by persons who are not properly licensed to perform such services in the state of Iowa. This rule shall not be construed as restricting truthful advertising by business entities that appropriately place professional engineers or professional land surveyors in responsible charge of the professional services offered to and performed for the public.

8.5(2) Definitions. For purposes of this rule, the following definitions apply:

"Business entity" includes corporations, partnerships, limited liability companies, persons using fictitious or assumed names, or any other form of entity that may conduct business.

"In responsible charge" means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 542B.2(6). Indications of being in responsible charge include:

1. Obtaining or setting the project or service parameters or criteria.
2. Dictating the manner and methods by which professional services are performed.
3. Establishing procedures for quality control and authority over professional services in a manner that ensures that the professional licensee is in control of the work and of all individuals performing the work under the licensee's supervision.
4. Spending sufficient time directly performing the work or directly supervising the work to ensure that the licensee is familiar with all significant details of the work.
5. Maintaining familiarity with the capabilities and methods of the persons performing professional services, and providing adequate training for all persons working under the licensee's direct supervision.
6. Sustaining readily accessible contact with all persons performing professional services by direct physical proximity, or as appropriate in the licensee's professional judgment, by frequent communication, in clear and complete verbal and visual form, of information about the work being performed.
7. Specifically pertaining to land surveying, reviewing all field evidence and making all final decisions concerning the placement of survey monuments and surveyed lines.

“*Professional services*” includes professional engineering and professional land surveying services, as defined in Iowa Code sections 542B.2(5), 542B.2(8) and 542B.27, as applicable to the fact situation at issue.

8.5(3) *General rule.* Business entities offering professional services to the public must be owned, managed, or appropriately staffed by one or more professional engineers or professional land surveyors, as applicable, who are in responsible charge of all professional services offered and performed.

8.5(4) *Appropriate staffing.* The nature and extent of appropriate staffing by licensed professionals is necessarily a fact-based determination dependent on such factors as the nature and volume of professional services offered and performed, the risk of unlicensed practice, the impact of the professional services on the life, health and safety of the public and the public’s property, and the representations made to the public. While the legal nature of the business entity’s relationship (e.g., owner, manager, employee) with a licensed professional engineer or professional land surveyor is not necessarily determinative, licensed professionals must be in responsible charge of all professional services offered and performed.

8.5(5) *Professional engineering or professional land surveying firms.* Business entities holding themselves out to the public as professional engineering or professional land surveying firms cannot satisfy the requirements of this rule solely by retaining, through employment or contract, a licensed professional on an as-needed, occasional or consulting basis. Such an arrangement fosters unlicensed practice by the unlicensed owners or managers who place themselves in charge of determining when a licensed professional is needed. When a business entity conveys to the public that it is organized as a firm of licensed professionals, the public has a right to expect that the firm retains the full-time services of one or more licensed professionals. “Full-time” in this context is not measured by hours, but by a licensee’s sustained, meaningful, and effective, direct supervision of all professional services performed, whether the firm performs services, for example, 20 hours per month or 80 hours per week.

8.5(6) *Restricted services.* Business entities that do not generally hold themselves out to the public as professional engineering or professional land surveying firms, but that do offer some type of professional engineering or professional land surveying service, shall be appropriately staffed by licensed professionals in a manner that:

- a. Corresponds with the representations made to the public.
- b. Places licensed professionals in responsible charge of all professional services performed.
- c. Guards against the unlicensed practice of professional engineering or professional land surveying.

8.5(7) *Permitted practices.*

a. Nothing in this rule is intended to prevent an individual or business entity from truthfully offering services as a project manager, administrator, or coordinator of a multidisciplinary project.

b. Nothing in this rule prevents a joint venture arrangement between an engineering or land surveying firm and a business entity that is not owned, managed, or staffed by professional engineers or professional land surveyors, in which the venturing entities jointly and truthfully offer professional engineering or professional land surveying services on a project-by-project basis. Licensed professional engineers and professional land surveyors who participate in such arrangements shall ensure that the public is accurately informed as to the nature of all professional services to be performed and by whom the services will be performed.

8.5(8) *Remedies against licensees.* Licensed professional engineers or professional land surveyors who aid and abet the unlicensed offering or practice of professional engineering or professional land surveying, or who otherwise knowingly participate in a business entity that does not comply with this rule, are engaging in unethical practices that are harmful or detrimental to the public and are subject to disciplinary action by the board.

8.5(9) *Remedies against business entities and unlicensed individuals.* The board may by order impose civil penalties against any business entity or unlicensed individual that offers or performs professional services in violation of Iowa Code chapter 542B.

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These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 542B.6, 542B.21 and 542B.26 and chapter 272C.

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