

FACT SHEET SB1274

The Board of Technical Registration

The Legislature created the Board of Technical Registration in 1921, following a series of high profile, national, building disasters; a direct result of the unregulated practice of the science and building design professions. It regulates the practice of engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, geology and land surveying.

- *Professional Engineers* design bridges, roads and streets, commercial buildings of all types, chemical plants, wastewater piping and hazardous waste and sewage disposal systems, pollution control systems, drainage and flood control, dams, irrigation structures, petroleum refineries, food processing plants and other factories, electrical power services, lighting, fire protection, HVAC systems, testing systems for metal processing, mining safety issues.
- *Registered Architects* design buildings and the sites they are located on. They coordinate the building of structures with professional engineers, professional geologists, surveyors and landscape architects.
- *Professional Geologists*: evaluate mining and petroleum properties; they work on ground stability issues and design grading and drainage plans to help retain water. This profession is almost as diverse as engineering.
- *Professional Landscape Architects*: determine the proper use of land by analyzing land features. They also design grading and drainage plans and determine issues related to erosion and other natural hazards.
- *Registered Land Surveyors*: measures boundaries of properties and records accurate legal title for property owners.

The Board also regulates professional firms, and two unrelated industries: the home inspectors and the burglar alarm agents and businesses. The Board's registrant base totals over 30,000 active licensees and 5500 registered firms.

The Board has always been a 'consolidated' board; meaning that it efficiently and cost effectively regulates multiple professions and occupations as only one agency with minimal staff. The Board is a self-sustaining agency. In 2019, its revenues exceeded 2.7 million and it operates on a 2.3 million dollar annual budget.

Current Board composition:

- 3 professional registered engineers, (one of whom must be a civil engineer,) who represent 18,000+ registered professional engineers from 17 technically distinct branches;
- 2 registered architects representing 6000+ licensees;
- 1 registered land surveyor (1200+ registrants);
- 1 registered geologist (900+ licensees);
- 1 professional registered landscape architect (750+);
- 1 public member.

None of the represented professions has a voting majority. The Governor can appoint members to serve two 3-year terms, and members can legally serve until the Governor chooses and appoints qualified replacements

Licensing:

Unlike its neighboring states, Arizona does not require that science and building design professionals obtain formal education in order to qualify for licensure. That means that the Board members must undertake a diligent review of the statutorily required credentials applicants present in order to determine if they are qualified to practice their professions safely.

Without sufficient representation from the professions on the Board, in the 17 distinct branches of engineering and in the equally diverse profession of geology specifically, making these determinations will take longer and may become expensive. Applications will have to be sent to experts, who may also demand payment to make the determinations. This anticipated process will delay the timeliness of getting applicants to work and will cost the Board money it currently doesn't have in its budget to pay such experts.

The Board granted over 1000 applications for registration and renewed over 10,000 licenses in 2019. Application fees for registration in all categories cost only \$100, a fee that is one of the lowest in the country, and certainly in Arizona among the other professional state regulatory boards. The Board's application fees have not increased in nearly a decade. License renewal fees for all categories are only \$75 a year.

Enforcement:

The Board receives approximately 150 complaints a year. Its members must determine whether a registered professional has applied the required technical knowledge and skill to the work performed. In other words, the Board must determine whether a registrant has practiced properly and safely. Without sufficient subject matter experts on the Board, making those determinations will become more challenging, more time consuming, and possibly more expensive.

In 2019, the Board opened 143 investigations, resolved 165 complaints, and is currently investigating 56 complaints. The Board relies upon volunteer subject matter experts to assess issues of technical knowledge and skill at enforcement advisory committee meetings. Respondents are invited to attend those committee meetings and encouraged to participate in the Board's investigative process. But not every respondent chooses to do so.

Often, during open meetings, respondents appear and present the Board with evidence that either wasn't available to the enforcement advisory committee members or wasn't presented there. Board members must review all the evidence available to make fair and reasoned decisions in order to resolve complaints in the public's best interest. Without sufficient membership on the Board who possess the necessary technical knowledge and skill to make those fair decisions, the Board's ability to protect the public effectively may be compromised.

If you have any questions about the Board or its processes, please contact Staff.