Missouri Rules and Regulations

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Module 1: Engineering Law and Regulatory Framework

Purpose

This module explains how Missouri regulates the offering and performance of professional engineering services. It distinguishes the authority of an individual professional engineer from the requirements applicable to engineering businesses and examines the professional competence and control needed for particular assignments.

Missouri's engineering laws establish responsibilities that apply before engineering services are offered, while work is being performed, and when engineering decisions are communicated to clients, employers, or public authorities. Understanding these responsibilities helps professional engineers recognize when licensure is required, when a statutory exemption may apply, and when an assignment exceeds their professional qualifications.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this module, participants should be able to:

1. Distinguish Missouri engineering statutes, administrative regulations, and board guidance.
2. Recognize activities that constitute professional engineering practice or an offer to practice in Missouri.
3. Distinguish individual professional engineering licensure, protected professional titles, and applicable business authorization requirements.
4. Explain how professional competence and responsible charge apply to engineering assignments.
5. Evaluate the conditions and limitations of selected exemptions from Missouri's professional engineering licensure requirements.

1. Purpose and Sources of Engineering Regulation

Professional engineering regulation protects the public by establishing minimum qualifications for individuals who perform engineering work and by holding licensed professionals accountable for their technical decisions.

Engineering decisions can affect the structural integrity of buildings, the safety of industrial equipment, the reliability of utility systems, and the performance of public infrastructure. Errors in these decisions may expose workers, occupants, and communities to substantial risks.

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Missouri regulates professional engineering through Chapter 327 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri and administrative regulations adopted under the state's professional licensing framework.

Missouri Engineering Practice Act

Chapter 327, RSMo, establishes the statutory framework for professional engineering licensure and practice. It addresses professional qualifications, the activities constituting engineering practice, business authorization, statutory exemptions, and professional accountability.

Several provisions are especially important to practicing engineers:

- Section 327.181 defines professional engineering practice and addresses professional titles and responsible charge.
- Section 327.191 establishes licensure requirements and identifies circumstances in which specified persons may perform engineering-related activities without individual PE licensure.
- Section 327.381 addresses licensure of professionals already licensed in other jurisdictions.
- Section 327.401 addresses professional practice through business organizations and certificates of authority.
- Section 327.421 establishes requirements for professional involvement in covered public works.

These provisions operate together. An engineer may have the technical knowledge necessary to perform a task but still lack the legal authorization required to offer or perform that service in Missouri. Similarly, a business may be properly organized under Missouri business law without satisfying the professional authorization requirements applicable to its engineering services.

Missouri Licensing Board

The Missouri Board for Architects, Professional Engineers, Professional Land Surveyors, Professional Landscape Architects, and Licensed Interior Designers is established under Section 327.031, RSMo.

Section 327.041 gives the board authority to administer and enforce Chapter 327, establish professional conduct regulations, and adopt procedures necessary for administering the licensing framework.

The board's responsibilities include evaluating qualifications for professional licensure, administering professional registration requirements, adopting applicable regulations, and addressing potential violations through the procedures established by law.

The statutory board name was expanded in 2026 to include licensed interior designers. This change does not remove the board's responsibility for professional engineering regulation.

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Statutes, Administrative Rules, and Board Guidance

Missouri engineers should distinguish three sources of regulatory information.

Source	Function	Regulatory significance
Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 327	Establishes licensing authority, practice restrictions, exemptions, and statutory obligations	Binding state law
Missouri Code of State Regulations, Title 20, Division 2030	Establishes administrative and professional conduct requirements under delegated authority	Binding administrative regulations
Official board instructions, forms, and guidance	Explains applications, administrative procedures, and implementation	Administrative guidance that does not independently replace statutory or regulatory requirements

For example, a statute may establish when professional licensure is required, while a board regulation explains professional conduct or application procedures. A board form may identify the information needed to process an application.

When determining whether a particular engineering service is legally authorized, the engineer should begin with the applicable statute, examine relevant regulations, and use current board guidance to understand the administrative process.

Incorporated Standards and Technical Codes

Chapter 327 establishes professional licensing and practice obligations. It does not, by itself, make every engineering technical standard applicable to every Missouri project.

Building codes, electrical codes, structural standards, and other technical requirements may become legally applicable through adoption by a competent state or local authority or through another applicable legal requirement.

Engineers must therefore distinguish the professional authority to practice engineering from the technical requirements governing a particular project.

For example, a Missouri-licensed PE evaluating an industrial facility may need to determine which building, mechanical, electrical, or safety requirements apply to the facility. The engineer's professional license does not eliminate the obligation to identify the governing technical requirements.

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2. What Constitutes Engineering Practice

Missouri defines professional engineering practice broadly. Section 327.181 focuses on the nature of the services offered or performed and whether their adequate performance requires engineering education, training, experience, and specialized technical knowledge.

The definition encompasses activities such as:

- Engineering consultation and investigation.
- Evaluation of engineering systems and facilities.
- Planning and design of engineering works.
- Engineering studies and recommendations.
- Coordination of engineering design services.
- Construction observation and inspection for compliance with engineering drawings and specifications.
- Engineering services involving buildings, structures, utilities, machines, equipment, processes, and work systems.

The definition is not limited to preparing construction drawings. Engineering evaluations, technical recommendations, and design coordination may constitute professional engineering practice when they involve the specialized judgment described by the statute.

Engineering Practice Versus General Technical Work

The classification of an activity depends on its substance rather than its job title.

For example, collecting equipment measurements under an established procedure may be a technical support activity. Interpreting those measurements to determine whether a pressure vessel can safely operate under specified conditions may require professional engineering judgment.

Likewise, preparing a drawing from instructions supplied by a licensed engineer differs from independently determining the design criteria and accepting responsibility for the resulting engineering design.

The distinction becomes especially important when engineering recommendations will influence construction, equipment operation, facility modifications, or public safety.

Offering Engineering Services

Missouri's definition expressly includes offering to render professional engineering services.

An offer may arise before the engineering work begins. A proposal, solicitation, or professional representation may communicate that an individual or business is willing and able to perform engineering services.

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However, Missouri recognizes an important statutory exception for certain offers made by persons or corporations authorized to practice engineering in another jurisdiction. This exception is addressed in Section 6.

Consequently, the fact that a proposal concerns professional engineering does not automatically establish unauthorized practice. The engineer must consider both the general licensing requirement and any applicable statutory exception.

Professional Judgment and Intended Use

An engineering evaluation may have different regulatory implications depending on the services involved and the intended use of the results.

Consider an industrial facility that requests an assessment of its equipment support system. The work may involve calculating loads, evaluating structural capacity, and recommending modifications.

When the evaluation requires specialized engineering knowledge and produces conclusions intended to guide engineering decisions, it falls within the types of services described in Missouri's statutory definition.

The engineer must then determine who is legally authorized to provide the service, whether a statutory exception applies, and who will exercise professional responsibility over the technical work.

3. Individual Licensure and Professional Titles

Missouri Professional Engineering Licensure

Section 327.191 establishes Missouri's general prohibition against unauthorized professional engineering practice.

An individual ordinarily must hold the required Missouri professional engineering authorization before performing regulated professional engineering services, unless a statutory exception applies.

Professional engineering licensure establishes that the individual has satisfied the state's licensing requirements. It does not authorize the engineer to perform every type of engineering assignment regardless of education, training, or experience.

For example, a professional engineer whose background is primarily in transportation engineering should not assume that licensure alone establishes competence to independently design specialized high-pressure industrial equipment.

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Purchase this course to see the remainder of the technical materials.