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Florida Laws and Rules for Engineers 2026-27

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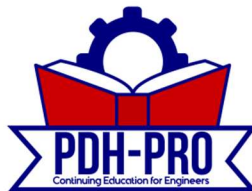
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Chapter 1: The Regulatory Landscape and Framework

1.1 Overview

This course provides a focused review of the Florida laws and rules that govern the practice of professional engineering. It is intended for Florida-licensed Professional Engineers who need to satisfy the one-hour Florida Laws and Rules continuing education requirement for license renewal.

The course explains the relationship between Chapter 455, Florida Statutes; Chapter 471, Florida Statutes; and Chapter 61G15, Florida Administrative Code. It also reviews the roles of the Florida Board of Professional Engineers and the Florida Engineers Management Corporation in licensing, rulemaking, continuing education, enforcement, and discipline.

Because Florida engineering regulation affects day-to-day professional practice, this course emphasizes practical compliance issues rather than abstract legal theory. Topics include continuing education requirements, NCEES CPC tracking, ethics course approval, signing and sealing requirements, digital and electronic document authentication, delegated engineering documents, structural engineering recognition, threshold building inspection requirements, selected discipline-specific practice responsibilities, and disciplinary enforcement.

The course also highlights recent statutory and rule changes. This chapter introduces the basic legal framework that governs the practice of professional engineering in Florida. A Florida professional engineer does not practice under a single rule or statute. Instead, engineering licensure and professional conduct are governed by a combination of general professional licensing laws, the Florida Engineering Practice Act, and the rules adopted by the Florida Board of Professional Engineers.

Understanding how these authorities fit together is important. The statutes establish the legal authority for regulation, while the Board's rules provide the detailed requirements that engineers must follow in daily practice.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain how Chapter 455, Florida Statutes; Chapter 471, Florida Statutes; and Chapter 61G15, Florida Administrative Code, work together to regulate the practice of professional engineering in Florida.



- Identify the roles of the Florida Board of Professional Engineers and the Florida Engineers Management Corporation in licensing, rulemaking, continuing education, investigations, and disciplinary enforcement.
- Recognize Florida's continuing education requirements for Professional Engineers, including the Florida Laws and Rules hour, ethics hour, area-of-practice hours, NCEES CPC Tracking requirements, and recordkeeping responsibilities.
- Apply key Florida professional practice requirements related to signing and sealing, digital and electronic document authentication, delegated engineering documents, structural engineering recognition, threshold building inspection, and selected discipline-specific responsibilities.
- Recognize common compliance issues that may lead to Board action, including continuing education deficiencies, improper sealing, practicing outside one's competence, deficient engineering documents, unlicensed practice, and failure to respond to Board or FEMC requests.

1.2 The Hierarchy of Engineering Law

The practice of professional engineering in Florida is governed by three primary layers of authority:

1. General professional licensing statutes;
2. The Florida Engineering Practice Act; and
3. Administrative rules adopted by the Florida Board of Professional Engineers.

Florida Statutes Chapter 455: General Professional Regulation

Chapter 455, Florida Statutes, contains general provisions that apply to professions regulated by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR). It is not limited to engineers. Instead, it establishes broad requirements and procedures that apply across many licensed professions.

Chapter 455 reflects the Legislature's policy that professional regulation should protect the public health, safety, and welfare, but should not create unnecessary barriers to qualified individuals who seek to practice a lawful profession. For engineers, Chapter 455 is important because it provides many of the general rules for licensure administration, discipline, continuing education monitoring, and enforcement procedures.

Florida Statutes Chapter 471: The Engineering Practice Act

Chapter 471, Florida Statutes, is the primary statute governing the practice of engineering in Florida. It establishes the legal foundation for engineering licensure, defines the practice of engineering, creates the Florida Board of Professional Engineers, authorizes the Board to adopt rules, and sets forth requirements related to licensure, renewal, sealing, prohibitions, exemptions, discipline, and related matters.



For a Florida professional engineer, Chapter 471 is the central statutory authority. It defines who may practice engineering, who is exempt from licensure, what conduct is prohibited, and what disciplinary action may be taken when a licensee violates the law or Board rules.

Florida Administrative Code Chapter 61G15: Board Rules

Chapter 61G15, Florida Administrative Code, contains the rules adopted by the Florida Board of Professional Engineers to implement Chapters 455 and 471. These rules provide the detailed requirements that engineers most often encounter in practice.

The Board's rules address subjects such as continuing education, disciplinary guidelines, signing and sealing, responsible charge, engineering documents, digital signatures, special inspections, threshold buildings, and discipline-specific standards of practice. In practical terms, Chapter 471 tells engineers what Florida law requires, while Chapter 61G15 often explains how those requirements must be carried out.

1.3 Enforcement and Administration

Two entities play central roles in administering and enforcing Florida's engineering laws: the Florida Board of Professional Engineers and the Florida Engineers Management Corporation. They are closely related, but they do not perform the same function.

Florida Board of Professional Engineers

The Florida Board of Professional Engineers, commonly referred to as the FBPE or the Board, is created by Section 471.007, Florida Statutes. The Board consists of 11 members appointed by the Governor. Nine members are licensed engineers, and two members are laypersons who are not, and have never been, engineers or members of a closely related profession.

The Board is responsible for regulating the practice of engineering in Florida. Its responsibilities include adopting rules, reviewing and acting on licensure matters, approving disciplinary action, and enforcing the requirements of Chapters 455 and 471 and the rules in Chapter 61G15.

The Board has rulemaking authority to implement the provisions of Chapter 471 and those portions of Chapter 455 that apply to engineering regulation. This means that many of the practical requirements Florida engineers must follow are found not only in the statutes, but also in the administrative rules adopted by the Board.



Florida Engineers Management Corporation

Florida uses an administrative structure that is different from many other states. Section 471.038, Florida Statutes, creates the Florida Engineers Management Corporation, commonly referred to as FEMC.

FEMC is a Florida not-for-profit corporation established to provide administrative, investigative, and prosecutorial services to the Board. In practical terms, FEMC supports the Board's day-to-day regulatory work. This includes functions such as processing licensure matters, supporting investigations, and assisting with disciplinary proceedings.

When a complaint is filed against a Florida engineer, or when a continuing education audit or disciplinary matter is initiated, the process is generally administered through FEMC on behalf of the Board. The Board remains the regulatory authority, but FEMC provides the administrative and enforcement support needed to carry out that authority.

1.4 Current Statutory Updates and Exemptions

Chapter 471 includes several exemptions from the professional engineering licensure requirement. These exemptions are important because they define situations where certain engineering-related activities may be performed without the person being licensed as a Florida professional engineer.

Exemptions should be read carefully. They are limited exceptions to the licensure requirement, not broad permission to offer engineering services to the public. When an exemption applies, it applies only within the scope and conditions stated in the statute.

Industrial and Manufacturing Exemption: Section 471.003

One important exemption applies to certain in-house engineering work performed by regular, full-time employees of a business organization. Under Section 471.003(2)(c), Florida Statutes, licensure is not required for:

"Regular full-time employees of a business organization not engaged in the practice of engineering as such, whose practice of engineering for such business organization is limited to the design or fabrication of manufactured products and servicing of such products."

This exemption is intended for a limited category of in-house work. It applies where the employee is working for a business organization that is not offering engineering services to the public, and where the employee's engineering work is limited to the design, fabrication, and servicing of the organization's manufactured products.



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The current statutory language uses the term “business organization,” which is broader than older terminology that focused on corporations. This is a practical update because many modern businesses operate as limited liability companies, partnerships, joint ventures, or other business forms. The key point is not the exact form of the business entity. The key point is whether the work is being performed by a regular, full-time employee for a business organization that is not engaged in the practice of engineering as a service to the public.

Summary

Florida’s engineering exemptions should not be treated as general permission to practice engineering without a license. The exemptions are narrow and fact-specific. A person may fall within an exemption for a particular type of in-house work, but that does not authorize the person to use the title “Professional Engineer,” offer engineering services to the public, sign and seal engineering documents, or practice outside the limits of the exemption.

For Florida licensees, the practical lesson is straightforward: understand the boundary between exempt in-house activity and regulated professional engineering practice. When engineering services are offered to the public, or when engineering documents must be signed and sealed for permitting, construction, or public reliance, the requirements of Chapter 471 and Chapter 61G15 must be followed.



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the technical materials.