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Nevada Statutes and Regulations for Professional Engineers

Course Number: SL-02-642

PDH: 1

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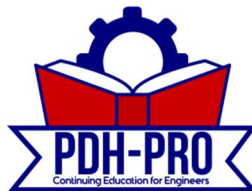
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Module 1: Introduction & Regulatory Framework

1.1 Course Overview

This course satisfies the Nevada Board-mandated continuing education requirement for state engineering laws and rules. Every biennial renewal cycle, licensed Professional Engineers (PEs) in Nevada are required to complete a minimum of 30 Professional Development Hours (PDHs). Under Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 625.430, at least **one (1) of those hours must be dedicated strictly to the provisions of Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapter 625 and NAC Chapter 625.**

The goal of this module is to establish a clear understanding of Nevada's dual-layered regulatory structure, define the exact legal boundaries of engineering practice, and clarify what it means to be in "responsible charge" of engineering work.

1.2 Understanding the Hierarchy of Nevada Law

When practicing engineering in Nevada, you are governed by two distinct sets of regulations that carry the full force of law. Understanding the difference between them is vital for regulatory compliance.

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS 625)

NRS Chapter 625, titled "*Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors*," represents the primary statutory law enacted directly by the Nevada Legislature. It establishes the legal framework for the profession, outlines criminal penalties for unlawful practice, and provides the statutory authority for professional licensing.

Nevada Administrative Code (NAC 625)

Because statutory laws often lack granular, day-to-day implementing details, the Legislature delegates authority to state agencies to manage enforcement. In our profession, this authority is given to the State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (NVBPELS). The rules written and modified by the Board are compiled into NAC Chapter 625. These regulations complement the statutes and dictate specific professional requirements, such as stamping rules, continuing education metrics, and firm registration procedures.

1.3 Key Statutory Excerpts & Definitions

To understand your legal obligations as a professional engineer, you must examine the precise language used by the Nevada Legislature. Below are the foundational statutory definitions that dictate when a professional engineering license is legally required and the extent of your professional liability.



Nevada Statutes and Regulations for Professional Engineers

Statutory Excerpt: NRS 625.050 — "Practice of professional engineering" defined

1. "The practice of professional engineering" includes, but is not limited to: **(a)** Any professional service which involves the application of engineering principles and data, such as surveying, consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning and design, or responsible supervision of construction or operation in connection with any public or private utility, structure, building, machine, equipment, process, work or project, wherein the public welfare or the safeguarding of life, health or property is concerned or involved. **(b)** Such other services as are necessary to the planning, progress and completion of any engineering project or to the performance of any engineering service.
2. The practice of engineering does not include land surveying or the work ordinarily performed by persons who operate or maintain machinery or equipment.

The Plain-English Breakdown: The "Public Welfare" Trigger

The legal threshold for what requires a license hinges entirely on **public safety and welfare**. If an engineering task, whether it is a preliminary consultation, an evaluation, a design drawing, or construction supervision, directly touches upon safeguarding life, health, or property, it is legally classified as the practice of professional engineering and must be handled or supervised by a licensed Nevada PE.

Statutory Excerpt: NRS 625.080 — "Responsible charge of work" defined

"Responsible charge of work" means the independent control and direction, by the use of initiative, skill and independent judgment, of the investigation or design of professional engineering or land-surveying work or the supervision of such work.

The Plain-English Breakdown: Direct Supervision vs. Rubber-Stamping

"Responsible charge" is the absolute core of an engineer's legal accountability. Nevada law explicitly prohibits "rubber-stamping", the practice of signing off on documents that you did not personally prepare or actively direct.

- **What it requires:** You must maintain independent control, direction, and final decision-making authority over the project's technical aspects. You must use your own skill and independent judgment to steer the investigation or design.
- **What it permits:** You are legally allowed to sign and seal work prepared by "subordinates" (defined under NRS 625.090 as anyone directly supervised by a licensed PE who assists them in practice), provided you exercise continuous direction and personal supervision over their output.



Module 1 Review Quiz

1. Which regulatory body has the authority to write and modify the regulations found in NAC Chapter 625?

- A) The Nevada State Assembly
- B) The Governor of Nevada
- C) The State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (NVBPELS)
- D) The Nevada Department of Transportation

2. Under NRS 625.080, what does "Responsible charge of work" legally mean?

- A) Being the highest-paid engineer on a project site.
- B) Maintaining independent control and direction of engineering work through initiative, skill, and independent judgment.
- C) Reviewing and stamping completed design files sent over by a non-registered third-party contractor.
- D) Drafting every line of a structural or civil drawing by hand.

Answers: 1: C, 2: B



Module 2: Nevada's Discipline-Specific Licensure System

2.1 Introduction to Discipline Licensure

Unlike states that grant a generic, umbrella Professional Engineer license allowing engineers to practice in any area where they deem themselves competent, Nevada is a discipline-licensed state. The State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors explicitly qualifies and licenses engineers in specific branches of engineering.

Under NAC 625.220, the Board recognizes and licenses distinct disciplines, including:

- Civil (CE)
- Structural (SE)
- Electrical and Computer (EE)
- Mechanical (ME)
- Environmental (ENVE)
- Chemical (CHE)
- Fire Protection (FPE)

An engineer must explicitly specify their chosen discipline during the application process and pass the corresponding NCEES Principles and Practice of Engineering examination to obtain licensure in that branch.

2.2 Legal Restrictions and Criminal Penalties

Because licensing is tied to specific disciplines, practicing outside your board-approved specialty is a major legal violation. Nevada law draws a strict boundary around your professional credentials.

Statutory Excerpt: NRS 625.520 (Excerpted) — Unlawful practice of engineering

1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 4, it is unlawful for: **(b)** Any professional engineer to practice or offer to practice a discipline of professional engineering in which the Board has not qualified him or her. **(g)** Any person to violate any of the provisions of this chapter.

5. Any person who violates any of the provisions of subsection 1 is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.



The Plain-English Breakdown: The Discipline Restriction

If a professional engineer holds a valid Nevada civil engineering license, they cannot offer electrical design services or stamp electrical drawings in Nevada, even if they have decades of experience executing electrical work in another state. To practice in multiple areas, you must successfully apply for, test for, and be granted licensure in each additional category or discipline requested (NAC 625.230). Practicing without this explicit board qualification changes an administrative mistake into a **gross misdemeanor** under state law.

2.3 The Structural Engineering Mandate

One of the most critical discipline boundaries in Nevada exists between civil engineering and structural engineering. While civil PEs are legally permitted to structurally design certain elements (such as minor foundations or standard bridges), Nevada designates specific project thresholds that strictly trigger the mandatory use of a licensed Structural Engineer (SE).

Regulatory Excerpt: NAC 625.260 — Licensure as structural engineer required for certain activities; exceptions

1. Only professional engineers licensed as structural engineers pursuant to this chapter may structurally design: **(a)** A structure requiring special expertise, including, but not limited to, a radio tower and a sign over 100 feet in height, using the bottom of the lowest footing or the top of the pile cap as the point of reference. **(b)** A building more than three stories in height. **(c)** A building more than 45 feet in height, measured from the lowest point of reference to the highest point of reference. **(d)** A building or other structure designated as an essential facility and assigned the classification of Risk Category IV in accordance with the International Building Code.
3. A professional engineer licensed as a civil engineer pursuant to this chapter may structurally design a structure, including, without limitation, a bridge, unless the structure is described in subsection 1.

The Plain-English Breakdown: Civil vs. Structural Boundaries

- **The 3-Story or 45-Foot Rule:** A licensed civil engineer can design a standard two-story commercial building. However, the moment a building goes over three stories or exceeds 45 feet in height, it legally requires an SE.
- **Risk Category IV structures:** Regardless of height or size, any building deemed an "essential facility" (such as a hospital, fire station, police station, or emergency response center) strictly requires an SE for structural design.
- **The Component Exception:** A non-SE professional engineer is legally allowed to design an isolated *component part* of a building higher than 45 feet, provided they are qualified in their own discipline. However, that component design must be reviewed and accepted by the structural engineer of record for the overall project.