

BOARD OPINION

VENDOR DESIGN vs PRESCRIPTIVE MEMBER SELECTION

QUESTION

Is it in keeping with Alabama law for an unlicensed individual to interpret construction documents for the purpose of determining the proper loads to be applied to the building's structure, and then to design the structural elements that comprise the roof or floor system, and then to prepare and issue drawings for use in the purchase of the materials, the layout of the structural elements, and the installation of bracing, blocking, web reinforcement, and member stabilization?

If this individual performs this work, is he or she practicing engineering without a license?

FACTS, LAW, AND ANALYSIS

Section 34-11-1.(13) defines the PRACTICE OF ENGINEERING as any professional service or creative work, the adequate performance of which requires engineering education, training, and experience in the application of special knowledge of the mathematical, physical, and engineering sciences to such services or creative work that includes evaluation, planning, design and design coordination of engineering works, products, and systems.

The work described involves the interpretation of construction documents, engineering design of structural systems, and the preparation and issuance of drawings for construction purposes. Under Alabama law, the performance of tasks that involve determining loads, designing structural elements, and preparing official construction documents are recognized as elements of engineering practice.

The Alabama regulatory framework for practicing engineering—including the licensing requirements set forth in Code of Ala. 1975 and the accompanying Administrative Code—clearly reserves these activities for licensed professionals. This is done to ensure that public health, safety, and welfare are maintained through proper professional oversight.

As reflected in related Board rules and prior opinions on similar matters, an unlicensed individual carrying out such work would be deemed to be engaging

in the practice of engineering without a certificate of licensure. This would be contrary to the statutory and regulatory provisions governing professional engineering in the state.

CONCLUSION

It is not in keeping with Alabama law for an unlicensed individual to perform the described activities. All tasks that include the interpretation of construction documents for load determination, design of structural components, and the preparation and issuance of construction drawings must be carried out by an individual holding a valid engineering license.

Based on the context provided regarding the definition and scope of what constitutes the practice of engineering, performing the work described—interpreting construction documents for proper load determinations, designing structural elements, and preparing the associated drawings—would be considered engineering work. Therefore, if an unlicensed individual performs this work, they would be practicing engineering without a license, which is not permitted under Alabama law

ADOPTED: March 31, 2026