

***WABO/SEAW
Liaison Committee***

Washington Association of
Building Officials &
Structural Engineers Association
of Washington

WHITE PAPER 2 -2006

Title: Wet Sealing and Signing of Structural Submittals

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Abstract:

This white paper is intended to recommend policies for the sealing (stamping) and signing of construction documents by Professional Engineers. The submittal of original “wet-stamped” or “wet-signed” documents to the Building Official is not required nor necessary.

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Committee Mission Statement:

- *Improve communications between the public jurisdictions that administer building codes and the engineering design community that prepares construction documents.*
- *Improve consistency and quality of engineering submittals and project reviews.*
- *Build consensus between the engineering design community and building officials with regard to code interpretation and submittal requirements.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The requirements for the sealing, stamping and “wet-signing” of construction documents vary significantly in the various jurisdictions within Washington. Some jurisdictions even require multiple copies of “wet-signed” drawings. Design teams have a shared interest in maintaining control of the design drawings as well as an interest in efficient transfer and reproduction of the construction documents. This document reviews Washington laws and codes relating to sealing and signing of documents by registered professionals and presents recommendations for policy requirements for the acceptance by the jurisdiction.

II. GUIDELINES

1. All submittals to the Building Official, including construction documents and structural calculations, may be reproductions of the original signed and sealed documents.
2. Structural calculations submitted as review aids for permit review should have an initial page that describes the enclosed calculations and a seal (or stamp) of the registered design professional.

III. COMMENTARY

1. State law and code require documents prepared by registered professionals to be sealed and signed but nowhere do the state laws or codes require submittals of such original documents or multiple copies of such documents to bear the “wet” signature or “wet-stamp” on such documents to the Building Official.
2. The purpose of having the seal and signature on plans or other documents produced by professionals is to notify other parties reviewing or using those documents that they have been prepared by a registered professional.
3. The requirement for one or multiple sets of “wet-signed” documents does not prevent fraudulent use of the seal or modification of such documents, or provide protection under copyright laws.
4. All pages of the structural construction documents and revisions to those documents should bear the seal and stamp of the responsible professional engineer.

IV. RELEVANT STATE LAWS AND CODES

1. RCW 18.43.070 **Certificates and Seals.** “Plans, specifications, plats and reports prepared by the registrant shall be signed, dated, and stamped with said seal or facsimile thereof.”
2. WAC 196-23-020 **Seal/Stamp Usage.** (1) “Final documents are those documents that are prepared and distributed for filing with public officials, use for construction, final agency approvals or use by clients. Any final document must contain the seal/stamp, license expiration date and signature of the licensee who prepared or directly supervised the work.” (2) Preliminary documents are those documents not considered final as defined herein, but are released or distributed by the licensee. Preliminary documents must be clearly identified as “PRELIMINARY” or contain such wording so it may be differentiated from a final document. Preliminary documents shall be stamped and dated, but need not be signed by the licensee.”
3. WAC 196-23-070 **Signature.** This WAC describes the meaning or requirements of a “handwritten identification” and a “digital identification”.
4. IBC Section 106.1 **Submittal documents.** “Construction documents, special inspection and structural observation programs, and other data shall be submitted in one or more sets with each application for a permit. The construction documents shall be prepared by a registered design professional where required by the statutes of the jurisdiction in which the project is to be constructed. Where special conditions exist, the building official is authorized to require additional construction documents to be prepared by a registered design professional.