

HB 590 INTERIOR DESIGNER REGISTRATION BILL

Creates “Registered Interior Designers” with the authority to seal interior construction drawings in all building classifications.

Building Classifications include:

a) Assembly Occupancy (all 5 types including but not limited to Performing Arts Theaters, Motion Picture Theaters, Arenas, Stadiums, Gathering Halls, and Airport Terminals) b) Business Occupancy; c) Educational Occupancy (Kindergarten through Grade Twelve); d) High Hazard Occupancy (all 5 types including but not limited to Flammable Materials, Combustible Materials, and Toxic Materials; e) Institutional I-1 Occupancy (Congregate Care, Senior Assisted Living, Group Homes); f) Institutional I-2 Occupancy (Hospitals, Skilled Nursing, Child Care, and 24-hour care); g) Institutional I-3 Occupancy (Jails, Prisons, and Courthouse Holding Cells); h) Mercantile Occupancy; i) Residential Occupancy (Hotels, Multi-family Apartments, and Dormitories); j) High Rise Buildings (more than 75 feet from the lowest level of fire department access to the highest floor).

What has the State of North Carolina required as a minimum standard for individuals to seal drawings for interiors in all of these areas, to date?

Education: Minimum 5-year curriculum in an accredited professional program or Masters in an accredited professional program with approved undergraduate degree.

Internship: 3740 hours minimum where 96 tasks are required in 6 separate categories.

Examination: A comprehensive examination focused on Health Safety and Welfare, administered in seven parts. In 2016 the passage rate ranged from 50% to 64%.

What is being proposed as a minimum for being able to seal interior drawings under HB 590?

Education: A two-year technical degree in Interior Design. *

Internship: May be self directed. No specific requirements to have ever prepared a set of construction related drawings or participated in any Health Safety or Welfare decisions.

Examination; Multiple choice. For a small fee self study programs will ensure you pass the exam, or your money back. Reference are provided during the exam to assist passage rate.

(* Per National Council of Interior Designer Qualifications (NCIDQ) website, it is possible to qualify to take the Interior Design Exam with less formal education, and an unsupervised intern training program.)

The bill states that Interior Designers can certify drawings within their areas of expertise. Who will monitors this?

The North Carolina Department of Insurance is being proposed to monitor whether Interior Designers remain within their area of expertise. Since there is no measure taken in the qualification process nor examination to determine what an Interior Designer’s area of expertise consists, The DOI has no way monitor this. In both the Architectural and Engineering professions, there are specific Boards who are well qualified to make such determinations and to enforce the law.

The Building Code is the authority with respect to most Health Safety and Welfare issues. How much knowledge of the building code are Interior Designers required to have?

INTERIOR DESIGNERS ARE TESTED BY NCIDQ ON ONLY 16 PAGES OF EXCERPTS FROM THE 35 CHAPTERS OF THE BUILDING CODE. WITHIN THE 16 PAGES PROVIDED TO THEM AHEAD OF AND DURING THE EXAM, THERE ARE NUMEROUS ERRORS AND OMISSIONS.

Architects are required to have working knowledge of all 35 Chapters of the Building Code. And Chapter 35 has over 100 additional code references architects are required to use when applicable.

Won't the Building Code Officials catch any problems?

There are three levels of code officials in North Carolina:

Level 1 - Residential.

Level 2 - Two story commercial and similar.

Level 3 - All occupancies in all building types.

Level 3 certification can be obtained by attending a one-week class on the code and passing a multiple choice written exam with the code in hand as a reference.

Officials in smaller jurisdictions may not often see complex projects, but would be required to perform all reviews of all such projects.

A code official will focus on major items. They may not check all items, for example to see if the UL design for a rated wall is the proper design or is properly drawn. They will not typically look to see if all items are coordinated between architectural and engineering disciplines. Interior Designers have no significant training in this important area of Health Safety and Welfare, nor, in accordance with the bill, any responsibility to do so. Rejected plans will go back to the designer with notation on which chapter of the code the problem arose. This will result in additional time and fees.

The code official is not the project designer nor the quality control officer for the project. Under current law, this is the role of the architect and should remain in the hands of a properly qualified professional.

Interior Designers have money driven interests in a project which could compromise decisions with respect to Health Safety and Welfare.

Interior designers claim to be losing 12% of income due to having to use an architect to certify their drawings. While this number is arbitrary and has no basis in fact, the more significant issue is that since Interior Designers are allowed to obtain a commission on products they specify for their clients, there is an incentive to specify a product not totally compliant with the best goals of an HSW program.

Architects are prohibited by Chapter 83A of North Carolina statutes to receive commissions from or have financial interests in the products they specify. There are cases in North Carolina where Interior Design Firms will perform the design without a fee in order to secure commissions on the product sales. This is an erosion of public trust, in that disclosure of such a conflict is not required by this bill.

ERRORS AND OMISSIONS IN THE 16 PAGE EXCERPT PROVIDED FOR INTERIOR DESIGNER EXAM.

1.0 Fire Resistance: Not applicable when building is sprinkled.

1.6 Suite: Term used for hospital room. No rating required.

1.8 and 1.9 Only applies to institutional buildings

2.3 Fire extinguishers depends on Fire Marshall requirements.

3.3.2 In hospitals emergency illumination is two hours.

3.4.6 Where there is no natural path of travel, it must be measured at right angles from the most remote point to the exit. The ONLY time that it can be measured on the diagonal is if the furniture is also on a diagonal.

3.5.1 6'-8" is allowed.

3.5.2 Egress doors must be 32 inches clear, which allows a 34 inch door.

3..5.16.3 Panic bars...no such requirement

3.6.2 This is a general requirement, there are a lot of exceptions to increase the distance.

3.7.1 48" - Only when unsprinkled.

3.7.3 Should be "Winder" not wider.

4.1 Counters over 8'-0"... Source unknown. Not in code.

5.0 Core Drills...Source unknown-not in code. The structural engineer MUST always be consulted prior to core drilling. In addition if the floor is prestressed or post tensioned, then the risk is cutting through tendon.

Sources: The 2015 code is not applicable in NC.