



Homeowner Rebuilding Bulletin

The California Architects Board (Board) is providing the following information to assist you when rebuilding. The biggest issues in these situations are obtaining copies of drawings to verify what was lost, and the process for hiring an architect.

RELEASE OF COPY OF PLANS

If damage to residential real property is caused by a natural disaster declared by the Governor, and if the damage is covered by insurance, any architect or other person who prepared the plans used for the original construction or remodeling of the property must release a copy of the plans to the homeowner (or the homeowner's insurer or a duly authorized agent) upon request and verification that the plans will only be used for verifying the fact and the amount of damage for insurance purposes. For this purpose, "residential real property" means a single-family residence, whether or not owner-occupied [Business and Professions Code section 5536.3].

The plans cannot be used to rebuild all or any part of the property without prior written consent of the architect or other person who prepared the plans. The architect or other person may charge a reasonable fee to cover the reproduction costs of providing a copy of the plans. If the architect is unavailable, a homeowner may contact the local building department to see if it has a copy of the plans on file [Health and Safety Code section 19851].

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

In many instances, it may not be necessary to hire an architect to design a single-family residence; however, an architect is required for non-residential structures. Architects have five years of education/equivalency, complete a two-year structured internship program, and must pass a national and state examination. The Board advises individuals to contact their local building department for clarification of the requirements for their project.

UNLICENSED PRACTICE

Only persons licensed by the Board may call themselves architects and provide architectural services. During a declared state of emergency, the penalties for an unlicensed person representing themselves to be an architect are increased and punishable by fines up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for up to three years (Business and Professions Code section 5536.5). When citizens respond to advertisements or solicitations offering architectural services, the Board advises they verify whether the person offering the services has a valid architect license.

CONSUMER INFORMATION

To verify licensure and obtain the complaint history of an architect, the Board has a toll-free number to aid disaster victims: **(800) 991-2223**. License status can also be verified on the Board's website at cab.ca.gov. The Board's *Consumer's Guide to Hiring an Architect* outlines how to hire an architect, lists steps to take in negotiating a contract, and offers general suggestions to assist in the planning process, and is also available at cab.ca.gov.

QUESTIONS

The Board's Architect Consultants and staff are available to answer questions about hiring an architect, contract requirements, obtaining copies of plans, and other important issues. Representatives are available to participate in outreach and education events as well. For additional information or to request an appearance, contact us at (800) 991-2223 or cab@dca.ca.gov.

