

CALIFORNIA ARCHITECTS BOARD

2020 Year in Review



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The [California Architects Board](#) (Board) licenses and regulates architects responsible for designing structures throughout the state. The Board protects consumers of architectural services, as well as those who inhabit or use the designed structures. This Brief provides a snapshot for the 2020 calendar year.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Architects Practice Act

<https://www.cab.ca.gov/act/>

Business and Professions Code §§ 5500 – 5610.7

Title 16, Division 2, California Code of Regulations §§ 100 – 160

California Architects Board Mission:

Protect consumers by establishing standards for professional qualifications, ensuring competence through examinations, setting practice standards, and enforcing the Architects Practices Act.

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS HIGHLIGHTS

The Board, with the assistance of the Department of Consumer Affairs’ Office of Information Services, implemented an online submission of continuing education (CE) verification. This allows licensees to more easily demonstrate compliance with the CE requirement.

There have been major outreach efforts made by the Board. Early in 2020, the Board released a revised version of the [Building Official Information Guide](#). Board staff also participated in several outreach efforts at California schools with the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) and attended two Architectural Education Summits hosted by the American Institute of Architects, California. Additionally, three [California Architects newsletters](#) were produced.

NEW LEGISLATION

AB 2113 (Low, Chapter 186, Statutes of 2020) requires boards within the Department of Consumer Affairs (Department), including the California Architects Board, to expedite license applications for applicants who are refugees, have been granted asylum, or are holders of a special immigrant visa.

SB 878 (Jones, Chapter 131, Statutes of 2020) requires each board within the Department, including the California Architects Board, that issues licenses to prominently display on its website, on at least a quarterly basis, either the current average timeframes for processing initial and renewal license applications or the combined current average timeframe for processing both initial and renewal license applications.

LICENSEE DATA & EXAM RESULTS

There are approximately 22,360 licensed architects in California. In 2020 of the 1,825 licensees issued by the Board, the majority, 68%, were for license renewals.

2020 Architects Registration Examination Results for California		
Topic	Pass	Fail
Construction & Evaluation	369 (56%)	293 (44%)
Practice Management	483 (45%)	588 (55%)
Programming & Analysis	352 (43%)	466 (57%)
Project Development & Documentation	379 (50%)	384 (50%)
Project Management	460 (56%)	364 (44%)
Project Planning & Design	395 (41%)	573 (59%)

Results for six topic areas, known as divisions, of the Architects Registration Examination (ARE), developed and administered by NCARB, are provide in the table.

ARCHITECTS REGISTRATION EXAMINATION UPDATE

In December 2020, NCARB began providing candidates the option to take the ARE through remote proctoring, in addition to the option of taking the exam in person at a testing center.

ENFORCEMENT DATA– COMPLAINTS, FINES, VIOLATIONS & FINES

The Board received 286 complaints in 2020.

Most complaints received were filed by consumers for allegations such as unlicensed practice, professional misconduct, negligence, and contract violations., or were initiated by the Board upon the failure of a coursework audit. Most disciplinary actions involved practicing without a license. The Board issued 60 citations with 84 violations. Of the 84 violations, 71 fell into four most common categories.

2020 Most Common Violations	Frequency
BPC section 5536(a) - Practice Without License or Holding Self Out as Architect	40
BPC section 5536.22(a) - Written Contract	5
BPC section 5584 - Negligence or Willful Misconduct	6
BPC section 5600.05(a)(1) or (b) - License Renewal Process; Audit; False or Misleading Information on Coursework on Disability Access Requirements	20

In 2020, \$9,000 in fines were assessed. The Board was successful in collecting \$61,120 for prior years' fines.

2020 Total Amount of Fines		
ACTION	YEAR	
	2019	2020
Assessed	\$36,000	\$9,000
Reduced	\$1,000	\$3,250
Collected	\$37,112	\$61,120

PREVIEW – UPCOMING CHANGES

The Board is working on adopting regulations for the following:

- Further define the existing CE requirement,
- Establish a retired license fee,
- Update disciplinary guidelines, advertising requirements, and rules of professional conduct.

The Board is in the midst of a multi-stage process to replace its existing business processing systems, with the goal of implementing a system that will allow for initial and renewal license applications to be submitted online.

The new [fingerprinting requirement](#) went into effect January 1, 2021, requiring candidates to submit fingerprints prior to licensure.