



AIA Colorado

A Component of The American Institute of Architects

Senate Bill 08-029 – Mandatory Continuing Education in Colorado Q&A

What is Senate Bill 08-029? Senate Bill 29 will require architects to complete continuing education every two years in order to renew their Colorado architect's license. After the continuing education program is in place, the state will develop an expanded program for architects to demonstrate "continued competency." The continuing education requirement is likely to be part of this ultimate system.

When will the bill go into effect? Rules for continuing education must be established by December 31, 2008. The rules will apply to architects renewing licenses on or after July 1, 2009.

Why did AIA Colorado choose to support Senate Bill 29? Architecture is an ever-changing field and AIA members realize how important it is to the health, safety and welfare of the public to ensure that architects practicing today are educated on new developments in the profession and a changing environment.

If AIA Colorado already required continuing education for its members, what was the motivation for making it a statewide requirement? AIA understands the importance of continuing education in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the public.

What legislators sponsored this bill? Senate sponsors included Groff, Bacon, Keller, Kester, Penry, Tapia and Tochtrop. House sponsors were Balmer, Fisher, Green, Labuda, Liston and McFayden.

Why is continuing education necessary in the architectural profession?

Architects are required to pass a series of exams to first become licensed, and those exams test the knowledge/skills required to practice when someone enters the profession today, as determined by a thorough Practice Analysis performed every 5 – 10 years. Many architects in Colorado, however, were licensed after passing previous versions of the exam, which, although appropriate for their time, did not encompass the full range of topics necessary for practice today.

What are some examples of how the requisite knowledge to practice architecture has changed?

There are many examples that were not tested on the ARE five, ten, or twenty years ago, including: sustainable design; accessibility; indoor air quality; design for response to terrorist threats; advances in disaster response; advances in seismic design; prevention of mold; new types of building systems; new project delivery methods, such as "integrated practice". The rate of change suggests that the knowledge base required of architects today to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the public will continue to change in the future.

Professional Development Units (PDU's) come in two categories, those that do and those that do not cover topics classified as Health, Safety, and Welfare (HSW). How will the state know that the continuing education taken by architects in the future will actually further the knowledge that is necessary to protect the public? AIA CO recommends that the state of Colorado adopt a program that only recognizes HSW credits.

Who will be responsible for determining appropriate state continuing education requirements? Members from the State Board of Examiners of Architects, state employees, representatives from The American Institute of Architects and allied professions will work together with the Department of Regulatory Agencies to establish appropriate rules for the program. The state licensing board has the ultimate authority to set the rules, through a process that will culminate in a public hearing this fall.

When will those requirements be communicated and how will they be communicated? AIA Colorado will work with the Department of Regulatory Agencies to communicate licensing requirements as they are finalized. Updated requirements will be communicated electronically and via mail.

How will it specifically affect AIA members? This law is unlikely to have a major impact on AIA members because AIA architects are already required to complete 18 hours of continuing education a year, 8 of which are HSW hours.

How does AIA Colorado plan to help architects licensed in Colorado meet the new requirements? AIA Colorado and the four local chapters are currently working on their strategic plans for 2009. Assisting architects in their educational pursuits continues to be an important priority at both the state and local levels. AIA Colorado is working closely with the licensing board to create a communication plan for all architects throughout the state on requirements.

Other than attending AIA Colorado educational events, will the AIA educate members on other continuing education resources? AIA Colorado understands that a variety of continuing education opportunities are important to our members as leaders of the architectural community. We plan to offer courses that meet the requirements soon to be established by the state of Colorado, and will also continue to advertise alternative programs that are of interest to our members.

Where can I find out more information about Senate Bill 29? To access the bill in its entirety go to www.leg.state.co.us. AIA Colorado will post updates on the effects of this bill as they are known. Additionally, formal updates will be published by the state board of architects, professional engineers and professional land surveyors.

How do I become part of future AIA Colorado legislative processes? The AIA Colorado Government Affairs Committee is open to all AIA Colorado members. The committee meets the 1st Friday of every month at the AIA Colorado office. Additionally, there is a legislative subcommittee that meets weekly during the legislative session that members may attend. AIA Colorado welcomes comments and suggestions from members at all times. Call the AIA Colorado office to submit a comment or suggestion at 303-446-2266.

How or will this affect any allied professions (engineers, etc.)? Continuing education and continued competency are likely to be a model for other professions in the future.

How many other states currently require continuing education?

38 other states currently require continuing education for architectural registration renewal or have enacted enabling legislation.

What about the states surrounding Colorado? The states of Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming all require demonstration of continuing professional development as a condition for registration renewal.

The state does not have continuing education requirements for either professional engineers or professional land surveyors. Why would such a provision be appropriate to apply to architects? The other professionals are in a better position to answer for their own practice. Nevertheless, it is clear that the knowledge base required for the practice of different professions is subject to different forces and rates of change.

How will the cost of my license renewal be affected? Because the state requires all licensed programs to be self funded through fees, there will be some increase in the cost to renew licenses. The state has not yet set this cost.