

Frequently Asked Certificate of Authorization (COA) Firm Licensure Questions

1. When do I need a license as a firm? I am licensed in South Carolina only as an individual. Do I need a COA (firm license) if I practice in my own name only?

A. An individual practicing engineering or surveying in his/her own name as individually licensed is not required to obtain a COA. For example, Joe Smith, PE, may practice as an individual if he uses that exact name. His business must be conducted under the name Joe Smith, PE. It cannot be Joe Smith Engineers, or Smith Engineering, or Joe Smith, PE, LLC, or other similar name. Any of those names would require licensure as a firm. Likewise, if a surveyor is licensed individually as Larry Jones, PLS, he may conduct surveying business under that exact name. If the individual has a corporation, LLC, PA, or other legal entity through which he/she practices engineering or surveying, that entity must be licensed as a firm in South Carolina prior to offering or providing engineering or surveying services. Please see Section 40-22-250 of the Code of Laws on this web site, especially subsection (A).

2. I am a registered South Carolina PE but I live and operate a business corporation in another state. Does my company need to get registered in South Carolina to offer engineering/surveying services in South Carolina?

A. Yes, if your company will be offering engineering/surveying services in South Carolina, you will need to register with our Board for a Certificate of Authorization. Also, since your firm is an out of state company, you will need to file with the [South Carolina Secretary of State's Office](#) for a Certificate of Authorization to Transact Business as a Foreign Corporation. You may obtain the [board application and instructions](#) for licensing your company on the board website. **PLEASE NOTE:** *The Certificate of Authorization to Transact Business in the State of South Carolina, issued by the South Carolina Secretary of State, is **NOT** the same as the Certificate of Authorization (COA) issued by the Board. If you have obtained a Certificate of Authorization from the Secretary of State and begin to offer and/or provide professional engineering and/or surveying services in South Carolina without a Certificate of Authorization issued by the Board, your company/firm will be subject to disciplinary action by the Board. PLEASE SEE §40-22-250 (A) OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS (2011).*

3. My company is an out of state business corporation with numerous shareholders, many of whom are not engineers, surveyors, or even employees. Can we obtain a Certificate of Authorization (COA) in South Carolina?

A. Yes, the South Carolina Board of Engineers and Surveyors does not require that a majority of the company owners be licensed engineers or surveyors. We do, however, require that a SC licensed engineer or surveyor be designated by the company to have corporate responsibility over the engineering or surveying work performed in South Carolina. The engineer or surveyor in responsible charge must be a full time employee.

4. I am an out of state consulting company and my firm is doing work for the Federal Government at Fort Jackson, SC. Since I am working on Government property, is my company exempt from obtaining a Certificate of Authorization?

A. No, your company is a consulting firm, not an employee of the Federal Government, the firm is required to have a Certificate of Authorization to offer services in South Carolina.