



Protect the Public & Be Aware

Over the last few years, the Oregon State Board of Examiners for Engineering and Land Surveying (OSBEELS) and other state licensing boards have seen a steady increase in complaints alleging fraudulent use of engineers' seals, specifically through "gig" or freelance websites. The complaints generally involve individuals who are advertising professional services on these websites **without the required professional license**.

As an example, OSBEELS received complaints which all involve a similar scenario—a member of the public or a general contractor needs engineering plans or a stamp for engineering plans already in their possession. This customer will contract with an "engineer" found on a freelance website who will agree to create plans, or to review and stamp plans, usually for a fraction of what the customer would pay should they hire an actual, professionally-licensed engineer. The hired "engineer" will then "draft" plans or "stamp" the plans the customer provided and return those plans to the customer. The customer will then submit those plans to a jurisdiction for review and permitting. Once submitted, the plans reviewer may notice an error in the plans or in the stamp itself (such as an inaccurate expiration date) and then reach out directly to the professionally-licensed engineer whose name is on the stamp. At this point, the PE whose stamp was used notifies the reviewer they were never involved in this project at all.

By the time OSBEELS investigates these complaints, the hired "engineer" has deleted their freelance account and essentially vanished. When OSBEELS does manage to uncover the hired "engineer's" true identity, that "engineer" is typically located in another country, which makes enforcement of licensing laws very difficult.

Ultimately, the PE's stamp is used without their knowledge and the customer who paid for services through the freelance website is left with plans they cannot use.

While OSBEELS does forward these cases to the Oregon Department of Justice for further review, we want to provide guidance to OSBEELS registrants to please be aware that their seals may be used without their knowledge. OSBEELS recommends licensees contact plans reviewers in jurisdictions they typically work with and notify them of this issue, as well as request the plans examiners contact them directly should any plans with their stamp appear suspicious.

OSBEELS requests licensees be vigilant and report any suspected fraudulent use of their seals to OSBEELS, either through [email \(osbeels.info@osbeels.oregon.gov\)](mailto:osbeels.info@osbeels.oregon.gov), or through our [complaint portal](#).