

Clarifications on Permitting Engineering Requirements  
**On-Premise and Off-Premise Signs**  
Effective September 1, 2009

Section 4605 (c) of *The Houston Sign Code* states:

*The application for a permit shall be submitted in such form as the Sign Administrator may prescribe and shall be accompanied by drawings and descriptive data to verify compliance with the provisions of this chapter.*

*Construction permit applications for any new signs, when erected or constructed to heights exceeding eight feet above ground level or in excess of sixty square feet in size, shall be accompanied by a design drawing of the sign structure and the sign, followed by an as-built drawing based on an on-the-ground inspection, both of which have been prepared by and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas; the Sign Administrator at his option may also require similar certification by a registered professional engineer where any unusual structural provisions of a proposed sign indicate such certification is necessary in the interest of public safety.*

Clarification:

*A sign permit application packet submitted by an individual (i.e., business owner that isn't a licensed City of Houston Sign Contractor) performing their own non-electrical sign work) for any new ground sign that is off-center of upright(s), or with transition(s) in upright(s), or with rebar and/or anchor bolts in footing/foundation, or a wall sign exceeding 8' maximum height (Max. Ht.), or a sign in excess of sixty square feet in size, shall include a drawing of the sign structure and/or installation prepared and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas.*

*Licensed City of Houston Sign Contractors must provide engineered drawings for ground signs with a maximum height (Max. Ht.) exceeding 19', or off-center of upright(s), or with transition(s) in upright(s), or with Channel Letters, or with rebar and/or anchor bolts in footing/foundation, or modification of existing ground sign or upright(s), or Refurb with full or partial removal & re-installation, wall signs exceeding 42' 6" Max. Ht., projecting signs, and marquee signs.*

*These application packets shall include design drawing(s) of the sign structure and the sign prepared by and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas. The Sign Administrator at his option may also require similar certification by a registered professional engineer where any unusual structural provisions of a proposed sign indicate such certification is necessary in the interest of public safety.*

**First "Clarification"** point states that an individual who submits a permit application packet for any new ground sign that is off-center of upright(s), or with transition(s) in upright(s), or with rebar and/or anchor bolts in footing/foundation, or a wall sign exceeding 8' maximum height (Max. Ht.), or a sign in excess of sixty square feet in size must provide engineering documents during the application process.

**Second "Clarification"** point states that a licensed City of Houston Sign Contractor must provide engineered drawings for ground signs with a maximum height (Max. Ht.) exceeding 19', or off-center of upright(s), or with transition(s) in upright(s), or with Channel Letters, or with rebar and/or anchor bolts in footing/foundation, or modification of existing ground sign or upright(s), or Refurb with full or partial removal & re-installation, wall signs exceeding 42' 6" Max. Ht., projecting signs, and marquee signs.

**Third “Clarification”** point is that application packets requiring engineering shall include design drawing(s) of the sign structure and the sign prepared by and certified by a professional engineer registered in the State of Texas. The Sign Administrator at his option may also require similar certification by a registered professional engineer where any unusual structural provisions of a proposed sign indicate such certification is necessary in the interest of public safety.

As-built engineering is only required for ground sign work performed without Sign Administration first being allowed to review plans & issue permits, & then being allowed to conduct necessary in-progress inspections. The engineer is required to produce as-built drawing(s), as well as a completed Exhibit A (attached hereto), or commensurate certification letter, with copies of anything referenced therein (e.g., photos). When required, as-built engineering must be received before a final inspection is conducted. Section 4605 (h) states that the construction permit is valid for 180 days. When ground sign construction isn’t completed, or, requisite as-built engineering isn’t received by Sign Administration, before the 180 days, the permit is considered null and void. If the sign is installed after lapse of the 180 days, a removal notice will be issued to the business, and the sign company subjects their license to being revoked, and citations being issued.

All engineering must meet the standards of published Informational Letters, & the version of the IBC currently adopted by the City of Houston, including wind speed, with .pdf from source designated therein.

The engineering requirement will apply to any sign (as defined in Chapter 46) that is being considered for refurbishing, reconstruction, alteration, enlargement, repaired, erected, attached, placed, fastened or replaced. A painted-on wall sign is considered to be exempt from engineering. However, if exterior lighting is added to the painted-on wall sign, the exemption doesn’t apply.

Important note: It’s the responsibility of the sign contractor and the engineer to know which Building Code is in use at the time of engineering and permitting. Currently adopted codes are online:  
<https://www.houstonpermittingcenter.org/building-code-enforcement/code-development#agency-links-7421>

Minimum engineered plan requirements shall include, but not be limited to, showing:

- Job site address (aka being address specific)
- All structural members and any attachments
- Cabinet, framing or other fabrication details
- Framing or other fabrication face elevation
- End or side elevation of sign
- Plan or top view of sign
- Upright(s) (pipe [metal]/pole [wood], size [including wall thickness {pipe}])
- Details of any transition(s) (reduction(s), match/base plate[s], etc.)
- Cabinet attachment/mounting details
- Welding symbol(s), with weld type & rod material(s), where applicable
- Footing/foundation details (diameter, depth, upright, rebar, anchor bolts, fill material, etc.)

Note: Alternative methods are not accepted on any drawings submitted for permitting. This applies to all signs, & pertains to all drawings, typical or sealed. For example, if a schedule of fastener options for Wall Sign attachment is shown, or, if Ground Sign footing or foundation options are shown, a single option must be selected.

Sign permit application packet processing could be delayed if Sign Administration has to obtain assistance from the Commercial Plan Review Group.

Section 4607--MAINTENANCE, SAFETY, REMOVAL, (a) Maintenance, states that all signs are to be kept in good repair and be free of deterioration. The Sign Administration Inspectors will be actively monitoring signs as well as those signs seeking a new permit such as adding a cabinet to an existing structure or face changes. If the sign appears to require maintenance, the site inspection could be denied and cause delay until the maintenance of the sign meets the standards and requirements of the code. It is possible that an additional repair permit could be required to perform the necessary work. Please call and speak with one of our plan checkers to determine.

Helpful Chapters of the Building Code include:

- o Chapter 16, Structural Design
- o Chapter 17, Special Inspections & Tests
- o Chapter 18, Soils & Foundations
- o Chapter 46, Sign Code (published separately). May be downloaded from Sign Administration web site. Sections 4609 & 4611 for additional references.

See Houston & National Electrical Codes for electrical signs.

The engineered drawings must reflect which building code is being used, indicate the wind speed on the drawings, & be accompanied by a .pdf from the source (if any) designated in the building code.

The Sign Administrator reserves the right to require additional information as may be required to determine compliance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations.

EXHIBIT A

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: Sign Administrator  
City of Houston  
Sign Administration Group  
Planning and Development Services Division  
Public Works and Engineering Department  
P.O. Box 61167  
Houston, Texas 77208-1167

REF: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Address of Sign Zip Code

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

This is to certify that the sign(s) were built as per the engineered drawings and complies with the Building Code/Sign Code. Attached is(are) the "as built" drawing(s), which I have sealed.

To the best of my knowledge, and in conformance with the design professional's permitted construction plans and specifications, the workmanship meets or exceeds the provisions of the Code.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Number, Seal Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

=====  
Sign Administration Use Only

Date Rec. \_\_\_\_\_ Inspector Assigned \_\_\_\_\_

Final: \_\_\_\_\_ If "no", must explain:  
Yes / No

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sign Company notified of deficiencies? \_\_\_\_\_ Comments in database? \_\_\_\_\_