

Consumer Guide to Geological and Geophysical Services

California Board of Registration for Geologists and Geophysicists

Earth Scientists of California Helping Provide To The Public

- Clean ground water
- Stable homesites, dams, schools, hospitals and other public buildings
- Hazardous waste disposal and cleanup
- Minerals, energy fuels and building materials

What is a Geologist or Geophysicist?

Geologists and Geophysicists are Earth Scientists. Their training and experience encompass the study of rocks and minerals, stratified rocks, earth structures and landforms. Geophysicists also investigate the composition and structure of material beneath the earth's surface by measuring various physical properties, such as electricity, magnetism and gravity. The broad field of geophysics also includes the study of earthquakes.

Anyone who offers to practice or practices geology or geophysics for the public in California must be licensed as a geologist or geophysicist. An engineering geologist must be additionally certified.

What Does A Geologist Do?

Geologists usually specialize in fields, such as: engineering geology; exploration for oil and natural gas or for mineral deposits; groundwater and environmental geology. Geologists conduct investigations and provide interpretative geologic services related to the origin, composition, history and structure of the earth. Consumers generally require the services of Engineering Geologists, whose work involve building sites, ground water, waste disposal and geologic hazard investigations for problems which include landslides, ground subsidence, faults, earthquakes and erosion potential. Investors in oil and mineral deposits should look for the signature and registration number of a California Registered Geologist on each geologic report.

What Does A Geophysicist Do?

Geophysicists utilize remote sensing techniques involving sound, electricity, magnetics, gravity, radio waves and radar to explore beneath the ground surface. Their techniques are commonly used to bridge the gap between surface mapping and costly excavations or drilling. Geophysics is often used to determine subsurface rock and soil properties; search for groundwater, oil and gas,

and minerals; map geologic structures; locate potential geologic hazards; and delineate hazardous waste. Geophysics frequently provides important information for foundation design, remedial cleanup actions, excavation planning and general geologic evaluations.

Where Do You Find A Registered Geologist Engineering Geologist or Geophysicist?

To find a qualified professional:

- Check the Yellow Pages; ask your local or county building department for the names of consultants who have worked in your area or call professional associations
- Ask for the consultant's state registration number or check with the State Board of Registration about the status of the consultant's license'
- contact former clients and ask their opinions about the quality of the consultant's work
- Understand the terms of the employment
- Have a written contract that specifies the terms and performance expected and includes time periods. Ask for itemization of any additional charges for drilling, laboratory testing and trenching. If the consultant asks for a retainer, know its purpose and whether it will be applied to the bill or charged separately. Professional consultants cannot discriminate because of race, color, creed, age, national origin, ancestry or sexual orientation.

Why Do You Need An Engineering Geologist?

Engineering Geologists apply geologic principles to solving civil engineering problems. They have special training in geology for working on civil engineering problems. Engineering Geologists evaluate the subsurface conditions of properties, as the conditions apply to civil engineering projects, when you are buying land, planning to build, or in the event that your property is affected by an earth hazard. They should also be familiar with the various governmental agencies and their regulations pertaining to land use, foundation conditions and land repair.

What is the Role of the Board of Registration for Geologist and Geophysicists?

The Board is an agency of the state of California within the Department of Consumer Affairs. The Board is funded solely by license renewal and application fees and receives no tax monies. The Board:

- Establishes a standard of work through registration and sets appropriate levels of education and experience.
- Deters negligent, incompetent or fraudulent practices through disciplinary action.
- Promotes good practice through guidelines, legislation and education.

If You Have a Complaint

If you have a complaint or wish further information on the Board's authority or license requirements, contact:

California Board of Registration for
Geologists and Geophysicists
400 R Street Suite 4060
Sacramento CA 95814
Phone (916) 445-1920
Fax (916) 445-8859
Executive Officer: Frank Dellechaie

Disputes over fees cannot be investigated by the Board unless there is indication of fraud or violation of contract. When the Board receives a complaint outside its authority, it will send the complaint to the appropriate agency and the complainant will be notified. Related professional services regulated by other agencies include civil engineers, soils engineers, geotechnical engineers and architects.

WHERE DO I GET GEOLOGIC INFORMATION?

The California Division of Mines and Geology is a state agency that provides information and publications on geology, mineral resources and geologic hazards. Its Publications and Information Office is located at 660 Bercut Drive, Sacramento CA 95814, (916) 445-5716. In Los Angeles call (213) 620-3560. The Division of Oil and Gas has information on oil and gas resources of California available at six district offices located throughout the state. Inquiries can be made at the main Sacramento Office (916) 445-9686.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) has publications on a wide range of geologic subjects. The USGS has a public inquiry office in Menlo Park (415) 329-4390.

The state requires county governments to have in their general plan a seismic safety element which contains earthquake and related secondary hazard information. City and county planning or building departments are the local agencies to contact. Federal agencies include the Soil Conservation Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Mines. State agencies include the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Water Resources, the Water Resources Control Board, the Department of Health Services, the Integrated Waste Management Board, the Office of Emergency Services and local university geology departments.