

**LETTER OPINION
2017-L-03**

May 12, 2017

Mr. Roger Kluck, President
State Board of Registration for Professional
Engineers and Land Surveyors
PO Box 1357
Bismarck, ND 58502-1357

Dear Mr. Kluck:

Thank you for your letter requesting an Attorney General's opinion on whether N.D.C.C. § 43-19.1-30 makes it unlawful for a county recorder to file or record any map, plat, survey, or other document within the definition of land surveying, if the document does not include the personal signature and seal of a registered professional land surveyor who prepared it, even if the map, plat, survey, or other document is filed or recorded as an exhibit or attachment to another document being filed or recorded.

ANALYSIS

Section 43-19.1-30, N.D.C.C., provides:

43-19.1-30. Duties of recorder. It is unlawful for the recorder of any county or any county or any proper public authority to file or record any map, plat, survey, or other document within the definition of land surveying which does not have impressed thereon and affixed thereto the personal signature and seal of a registered professional land surveyor by whom the map, plat, survey, or other document was prepared.¹

This law was originally passed by the Legislature in 1967.² Only minor changes have been made to the law since then.³

¹ N.D.C.C. § 43-19.1-30.

² See 1967 N.D. Sess. Laws ch. 352, § 30.

³ "Register of deeds" was changed to "recorder" in 2001 (see 2001 N.D. Sess. Laws ch. 120, § 1) and the word "professional" was added in 2009 (see 2009 N.D. Sess. Laws ch. 368, § 29).

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Recently, perhaps as the result of increased oil activity in the state, the North Dakota State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors became aware that some plats have been recorded, even though they did not include the signature and seal of a registered professional land surveyor. Some of these unsigned and unsealed survey plats were attached to easements as exhibits, with the plats providing land descriptions for the land covered by the easements.

The Board took its concern to the North Dakota County Recorders Association (Association). The response indicated that the Association felt N.D.C.C. § 43-19.1-30 did not apply to a map, plat, survey, or other land surveying document if it was filed or recorded as an exhibit or attachment to another document. The issue, therefore, is whether N.D.C.C. § 43-19.1-30 applies to the relevant documents when they are exhibits or attachments, as well as when they are the main documents being filed.

The plain language of N.D.C.C. § 43-19.1-30 states that it applies to “any map, plat, survey, or other document within the definition of land surveying.” There is nothing to suggest that it applies only to the main document that is being filed and not to exhibits or attachments.

Therefore, it is my opinion that pursuant to N.D.C.C. § 43-19.1-30, a county recorder may not file or record a land surveying document unless it includes the personal signature and seal of a registered professional land surveyor, even if the document is just part of an exhibit or attachment.

Sincerely,

Wayne Stenehjem
Attorney General

This opinion is issued pursuant to N.D.C.C. § 54-12-01. It governs the actions of public officials until such time as the question presented is decided by the courts.⁴

⁴ See *State ex rel. Johnson v. Baker*, 21 N.W.2d 355 (N.D. 1946).