

News Clips

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NCARB Announces ARE Security & Development Fee

Washington, DC—The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) will increase the fees for the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®) by \$40 per division effective 1 October 2009. The increase, which was announced today at the NCARB Annual Meeting and Conference in Chicago, is due to recent incidents of exam content disclosure by ARE candidates. The cost to develop and replace the exposed content and handle the administrative and legal costs related to these incidents totals an estimated \$1.1 million.

“The decision to raise the exam fees now—especially in the current economic climate—was not made lightly,” said Gordon E. Mills, FAIA, President. “However, NCARB’s responsibility to uphold the integrity of the ARE is our first and foremost concern.”

The ARE is designed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public by providing a psychometrically justifiable and legally defensible process that measures the level of competence necessary to practice architecture independently. In recent months, NCARB has had to turn off substantial amounts of content after several candidates posted detailed exam content on the internet. These candidates have had their exam scores canceled and testing privileges suspended for up to five years. To ensure the integrity of the exam, NCARB has been forced to add two full-time staff members to monitor and investigate exam disclosures and copyright violations.

Replacing exam content is expensive and time consuming because each vignette or multiple-choice item must be written, reviewed, edited, and thoroughly pre-tested before it is added to the exam. The process of developing replacement content will take two years and the involvement of many volunteer professionals. The current six-month waiting period between failed divisions is in effect to ensure that a candidate does not see the same question twice. If ARE candidates continue to breach the Confidentiality Agreement they accept to prior to taking each division and additional exam content is exposed, NCARB may be forced to extend the mandatory waiting period in order to prevent overexposure of content.

Since NCARB produced the first national exam for architects in 1965, the cost of delivering the test has been heavily subsidized by other NCARB programs. Since the ARE was computerized in 1997, NCARB has subsidized more than \$15 million in exam-related expenses. While the new fee structure will help offset the costs incurred as a result of exam disclosure, it still falls short of the actual cost of developing and administering the exam and monitoring its security.

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The current version of the ARE is comprised of seven divisions that test a candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform many of the tasks an architect encounters in practice. To become licensed, candidates must fulfill education and experience requirements, as well as pass all divisions of the ARE.

The new rate of \$210 per division will take effect on 1 October 2009. All exams scheduled on or after 1 October 2009 will be at the new rate. Prior to 1 October 2009, candidates can schedule future exam appointments through 31 December 2009 at the current rate of \$170 per division.

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About NCARB

NCARB comprises the architectural registration boards of all 50 states as well as those of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. NCARB assists its member registration boards in carrying out their duties and provides a certification program for individual architects.

The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public through effective regulation and exemplary service. In order to achieve these goals, the Council develops and recommends standards to be required of an applicant for architectural registration; develops and recommends standards regulating the practice of architecture; provides to member boards a process for certifying the qualifications of an architect for registration; and represents the interests of Member Boards before public and private agencies. NCARB has established reciprocal registration for architects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and is engaged in similar discussions with additional countries.