ETHICS TRAINING

FOR

PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

2025

PRESENTED BY MARK VARHAUG, PG, CPG - TEXAS BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

TCEQ ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE FAIR - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS - JUNE 3, 2025

TEXAS BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS MISSION STATEMENT

PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE, AND THE STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES…
-BY ENSURING ONLY QUALIFIED PERSONS CARRY OUT THE PRACTICE OF GEOSCIENCE
-ENFORCING THE CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT ESTABLISHED FOR OUR LICENSEES.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICS AND GOLF

MOST PEOPLE WOULD RATHER PLAY GOLF THAN LISTEN TO ETHICS TRAINING.

BUT THERE ARE SOME SIMILARITIES…

TO BE A SUCCESSFUL GOLFER, YOU MUST LEARN THE RULES AND PRACTICE A LOT.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

THE LONG GAME & THE SHORT GAME

IN THE LONG GAME, YOU NEED POWER TO GET YOUR BALL TO THE GREEN.

IN THE SHORT GAME, DIFFERENT SKILLS, WITH MORE KNOWLEDGE AND FINESSE, ARE NEEDED FOR ACCURACY.

DEVELOPING THOSE SKILLS – THROUGH PRACTICE – MAKES GOLF FUN.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICS TRAINING - THE LONG & SHORT GAMES

THE ETHICS LONG GAME IS THE COMMITMENT TO LEARN THE RULES AND LOOK AHEAD TO A TIME WHEN YOU MAY NEED THEM.

THE SHORT GAME IS APPLYING RULES, WITH KNOWLEDGE AND FINESSE, TO MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS.

TO BE SUCCESSFUL HERE ALSO, YOU HAVE TO PRACTICE AND BECOME A MASTER AT BOTH PARTS OF THE GAME.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICS TRAINING IS IMPORTANT

Ethics Concepts and Principles

TBPG Rules and the Code of Professional Conduct

Ethics Case Studies

TBPG Disciplinary Actions

TBPG Update

Rules Workshop

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

PRINCIPLES

All successful people operate by principles that help them be successful…

Principles are fundamental truths that serve as the foundations for behavior that… can be applied again and again in similar situations...

A relatively few well-thought-out Principles will allow you to deal with anything reality throws at you

Dalio, *Principles,*2017

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

PRINCIPLES

Without principles we would be forced to react to all the situations life throws at us individually, as if we were experiencing each of them for the first time.

If instead we classify these situations into types and have good principles for dealing with them, we will make better decisions more quickly and have better lives as a result. ”

Dalio, *Principles,*2017

ETHICS CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

Ethics refers to standards and practices that ensure a person's right behavior or code of conduct.

These are the systematic rules that teach the concept of right and wrong behavior.

Ethics are principles that help you make the best decisions about individual and businesses.

IMPACTLY INC & Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (scu.edu)

WHAT ETHICS IS NOT…

Ethics is not the same as feelings.

Ethics is not the same as science or religion. Science alone does not tell us what we ought to do; religious traditions vary & religious people can act unethically.

Ethics is not the same thing as following the law. A good system of law may incorporate ethical standards, but laws can also deviate from what is ethical.

A Framework for Ethical Decision Making - Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (scu.edu)

FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Identify the Ethical Issues. Clearly state the problem.

Get the Facts. What facts are known and unknown?

Evaluate Alternative Actions. Identify options.

Choose an Option for Action and Test It.

Implement Your Decision and Reflect on the Outcome.
How did it turn out and is follow-up needed?

A Framework for Ethical Decision Making - Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (scu.edu)

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Ethics Principles

- Be Honest
- Show Integrity
- Follow the Law
- Commit to Excellence
- Be Loyal
- Be Fair
- Respect Others
- Be Compassionate
- Keep your Promises
- Be a Leader
- Be Reputable & Moral
- Be Accountable

Jennings, *Business Ethics Case Studies and Selected Readings, 7th Ed.*

REASONS PEOPLE CHOOSE TO DO WRONG

Taking offense can make you open to a wrong decision

Financial vulnerability – watch your spending & have 6 month's savings

Learn to not be selfish – think of how your actions can affect your coworkers. Also, be generous…you have benefitted from the generosity of others

You're a member of the team

In a profession, be professional

If you don't know what to do, ask questions

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Real-life ethical dilemmas will be unique…

Dilemmas arise when people are forced to make a decision when faced with a situation they had never before seen…it had not happened during their lifetimes…they had not planned for such an uncertainty and had not practiced what they would do

To resolve a dilemma – and live to tell abut it – you need intuition and confidence that comes from study and practice of ethics rules and case studies.

Dalio, *Principles,*2017

SURVIVING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

You can't control the circumstances, but you do control how you react to them by practicing the principles.

You must create scenarios of possible dilemmas, and prepare by building principles that lay out in detail exactly how you will react to each possible occurrence.

Having these effective decision-making rules in advance reduces chances of making faulty decisions under pressure.

Dalio, *Principles,*2017

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

WORDS OF WISDOM

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN A CURE-

Avoiding temptation is much easier than overcoming it.

Staying out of trouble is a lot easier than getting yourself out of trouble

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STRESS CAN AFFECT DECISIONS-

With practice and experience you can learn to avoid situations where circumstances compel you to make a bad decision.

Predictably Irrational, Dan Ariely, 2008

“Right, we could go with the ethical decision,
but let’s not panic yet.”

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

CartoonStock.com

PLAN AHEAD

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Brace for Impact

To survive the challenge of an ethical conflict or dilemma, you must be prepared.

You must already have your ethical problem-solving strategies in place…or you must be a really fast learner.

It's better to have studied the principles and practiced your reactions.

"Do I have to practice?"

To strengthen your understanding of ethical principles, you need to study, understand, and practice problem-solving experiences - these lead to self-confidence and ethical intuition.

Ethical intuition leads to faster analysis and better solutions to your ethical challenges

Good News

Planning *and practicing* your ethical responses will make you an ethics expert - you will know how to do the right thing and be able to help you avoid reputation- and company-killing outcomes

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICS TRAINING IS IMPORTANT

TBPG RULES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

TBPG Rules and the Code of Conduct

The Texas Geoscience Practice Act became effective in 2003.

Geoscience practice in Texas is guided and governed by the TBPG Rules and the Code of Professional Conduct found in Texas Administrative Code Chapters 850 and 851.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

https://tbpg.state.tx.us

Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists

APPLY OR RENEW HERE

Home | A-Z Index | About | Enforcement | Exams | Licensing | News/Newsletters | TBPG

- Advisory Opinions
- MOAs and MOUs
- Reciprocity Agreements
- Resources
- Rules
- Rule Review and Resources
- Statute

Mission Statement

The mission of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists is to protect public health, safety, welfare, and the state's natural resources by ensuring only qualified persons carry out the practice of geoscience and enforcing the Code of Professional Conduct the Board has established for its licensees.

https://tbpg.state.tx.us/#

TBPG Code of Professional Conduct

The TBPG Code contains principles like those of many other professional organizations.

The Code is a guide to help you conduct your business ethically, honestly, and fairly.

TBPG Code of Professional Conduct

This is a summary of the rules in our Code of Conduct. In this review, if there is a conflict between the Rules and this presentation, the TBPG Rules prevail.

The terms “TBPG” or “Board” mean The Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists

“PG” means all Licensees of TBPG (Licensed Professional Geoscientists, Certified Geoscientists-in-Training, and Registered Geoscience Firms)

© 2025 Mark N. Varhaug

Chapter 851 TBPG Licensing and Enforcement Rules

Subchapter C. Code of Professional Conduct

§851.101. Code of Professional Conduct

§851.102. Competence/Negligence

§851.103. Recklessness

§851.104. Dishonest Practice

§851.105. Conflicts of Interest

§851.106. Responsibility to the Regulation of the Geoscience Profession and Public Protection

§851.107. Prevention of Unauthorized Practice

§851.108. Criminal Convictions

§851.109. Substance Abuse

§851.110. Effect of Enforcement Proceedings on Application

§851.111. Confidentiality

§851.112. Required Reports to the TBPG

§851.113. Duty to abide by Board Order and timely pay penalties

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Chapter 851 TBPG Licensing and Enforcement Rules

Subchapter C. Code of Professional Conduct

§851.101

This Code is binding on all applicants, license holders & licensees eligible to renew (incl. exempt practice like O&G exploration).

This Code allows TBPG to impose sanctions on violators.

PGs, GITs, and Firms must understand and comply with the Geoscience Act, the TBPG Rules, and any other law or rule pertaining to the practice of professional geoscience.

§851.102. Competence/Negligence

A PG will perform only the professional services for which they are qualified by education and experience in the specific technical areas involved.

A PG will act with reasonable care and competence and will apply the technical knowledge and skill ordinarily applied by reasonably prudent PGs practicing under similar circumstances and conditions.

§851.102. Competence/Negligence

A PG who signs or seals any document must be qualified by education and experience to give judgement on the work covered by the document.

A PG or Firm must not exhibit Gross Incompetence, showing inability, or lack of skill or knowledge, or unwillingness to apply principles or skills.

© 2025 Mark N. Varhaug

§851.103. Recklessness

A PG shall not practice geoscience using standards and procedures [that] do, or are reasonably likely to, result in the endangerment of public safety, health, or welfare. Such practice is deemed “reckless”.

Reckless practice includes conscious disregard of substantial risk and failure to comply with regulations

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

§851.104. Dishonest Practice

A PG, GIT or Firm shall not engage in practice in a manner that defrauds, deceives, or creates a misleading impression.

Inaccurate advertising, statements, or exaggerated claims or results are not allowed.

A PG, GIT or Firm shall not directly or indirectly solicit or offer, give or receive, anything or any service, to induce or reward someone in order to secure geoscience services.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

§851.105. Conflicts of Interest

If a PG has any business association or financial interest which might reasonably appear to influence their judgment and thereby jeopardize an interest of a client…they shall

Inform the client or employer in writing

Obtain client's written consent to continue the work

Unless consented to, must terminate either the work or the interest.

A PG, GIT or Firm shall not solicit or accept… any financial or other valuable consideration… from more than one party in connection with a single project … unless … fully disclosed in writing to all parties.

This also applies to suppliers, contractors, and consultants.

§851.106. Responsibility to the Regulation of the Geoscience Profession and Public Protection

A PG, GIT or Firm shall … protect the public… and shall not…knowingly participate….in any plan…[to] violate …the Act or the rules of the TBPG;

Nor aid or abet unlicensed practice;

Nor Fail to…prevent partners, associates, shareholders, or employees from…violating any provision of the Act or the TBPG rules.

A PG shall be responsible and accountable for…the use of their seal, professional signature, and other professional identification. If lost, immediately report that to the TBPG.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

§851.106. Responsibility to the Regulation of the Geoscience Profession and Public Protection

A PG, GIT, or Firm is obligated to protect public health…and… report known or suspected violations [to] TBPG.

A PG or Firm shall keep adequate records of geoscience services provided to the public for no less than five (5) years…

Signed/Sealed documents & supporting documentation

Descriptions of offered geoscience services;

Billing, payment, and financial communications.

A PG, GIT or Firm must adequately examine the environmental impact of their actions and projects, including the prudent use and conservation of resources and energy.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

§851.107. Prevention of Unauthorized Practice

A PG, GIT or Firm shall not practice… in another jurisdiction [that has] a law regulating the practice of geoscience in that jurisdiction.

If a PG or Firm fails to renew his/her license or registration prior to its annual expiration date, [the licensee] shall not use the title "Professional Geoscientist“, or the initials "PG“, and shall not offer to, or [actually] engage in, the public practice of professional geoscience… until the license has been properly renewed.

Similarly, GITs cannot use the initials “GIT” until the license is properly renewed.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

§851.108. Criminal Convictions

With regard to criminal convictions and licensure, TBPG adheres to the Texas Occupation Code (TOC) Chapter 53.

TBPG can suspend or revoke a license, or deny licensure, because of criminal convictions. Licenses are automatically revoked upon felony incarceration.

Any license holder whose license has been revoked due to incarceration, under the provisions of TOC53, may apply for a new license upon release from incarceration.

§851.109. Substance Abuse

If a PG's abuse of alcohol or a controlled substance…. contributed to a violation of the TBPG Act or rules, the TBPG may require the PG to complete a rehabilitation program approved by the Department of State Health Services.

A PG's abuse of alcohol or a controlled substance …. may be deemed "Gross Incompetency".

TBPG may order an examination by one or more licensed health care providers that provide diagnoses or treatment of substance abuse.

§851.110. Effect of Enforcement Proceedings on Application

TBPG may not issue a license pending the disposition of a complaint alleging a violation in Texas, or another state, if the TBPG has notice of the alleged violation.

§851.111. Professional Geoscientists Shall Maintain Confidentiality of Clients

A PG, GIT or Firm may reveal confidences and private information only:

with a fully informed client's or employer's consent,

when required by law, rule or court order; or

when those confidences, if left undisclosed, would constitute a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the public.

Licensees shall take reasonable care to prevent disclosure or use of private information or confidences concerning a client or employer.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

§851.112. Required Reports to the TBPG

A PG, GIT or Firm shall notify TBPG in writing within thirty (30) days of:

Changes in a firm's name, the Authorized Official of the Firm, the firm's owners, officers, or directors, PGs employed by the firm, PGs who serve as the PG in Responsible Charge for the firm or any branch offices, phone numbers of the AOF or PGs;

Changes in a PG's or GIT's contact information, and any changes in employment status with a firm;

A criminal conviction (excludes Class C misdemeanor/traffic offense) of PG or GIT;

Any civil settlement or judgment against a PG or Firm relating to professional geoscience services;

Final disciplinary or enforcement actions against the PG, GIT or Firm taken by a licensing or certification body related to the practice of professional geoscience.

Failure to make a required report is grounds for disciplinary action by TBPG.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

§851.113. Duty to abide by Board Order and timely pay administrative penalty

Failure to abide by the terms of a Board order is grounds for disciplinary action.

Administrative penalties must be paid in 30 days. Failure to timely pay such penalty is grounds for disciplinary action.

TBPG may deny a person's request for a license, registration certification, or renewal if administrative penalties are not timely paid.

TBPG may first apply money paid to outstanding administrative penalties before applying it to any other fee or cost.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Code of Conduct Summary

Learn these rules.

Don't let an ethical surprise force you to make a bad decision or take the wrong action.

Practice these rules to guide your actions and keep you from committing ethical blunders.

"Defeat is certain for him who has neglected to take the necessary precautions in time; this is called bad luck."
- Roald Amundsen

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICS TRAINING IS IMPORTANT

ETHICS CASE STUDIES

Appropriate Wedding Gifts?

You're an officer in a geoscience firm and one of your colleagues was just married. While telling you about the event, he mentions that two college buddies, who are also interns he supervises, were at the reception. They each gave him $1,000 as a wedding gift.

What should you do? The mere appearance of impropriety can be as powerful as the reality. A third party (attorney) could interpret the gifts as an attempt to influence from the interns. Or the interns might have felt they were compelled to make such a gift. Either way, the gifts could be perceived as a conflict of interest and the manager should return the gifts.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Proper analysis?

You review a Phase II ESA for a site that was a gas station for about 50 years. The report concluded there were no impacts, and no further assessment is recommended.

As you look more critically, you realize that sample locations and depths discussed in the report don't match the sample data on the lab report.

You reject the ESA conclusions, but should you also report the breach of ethics to the TBPG?
The errors or negligence in this report are significant and might need to be investigated.
These errors should be reported.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Should this be reported?

A licensed consulting company was hired to determine whether runoff from a proposed construction site would adversely affect a nearby stream. Before preparing the written report, the consultant advised client that the runoff **will** adversely affect the area and that remediation will be costly. The client instructed the consultant to not complete the report, pays them, and terminates the contract.

The consultant learned later that the client appeared at a public hearing with data showing compliance. What should the consultant do?

This should be reported. The client did not report the likely water quality risk to public health, safety, and welfare. The licensed consultant is required by the code of conduct rules to report this to regulators.

after NSPE Board of Ethical Review Case-76-4

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Summary

These examples show the variety of ethical challenges PGs may face. Every geoscientist should have a personal ethics code – one that says, "No matter what, I will not do *that*."

Study and practice your ethics principles. Once a year is probably not enough.

You are responsible for knowing and understanding the TBPG Rules and Code of Conduct.

If you aren't sure what to do, contact TBPG. It may help you avoid making a costly mistake.

Ethics knowledge and compliance must be part of your culture

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICS TRAINING IS IMPORTANT

BOARD DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Issuing geoscience reports without Firm Registration

An unregistered Firm issued as many as 50 geoscience reports during a one-year period.

The PG who signed the reports violated the Rules by aiding and abetting a business entity in the unregistered practice of geoscience and failing to provide the required Firm Registration Number on sealed reports.

The Board assessed the unregistered Firm and PG each a $1,000 Administrative Penalty.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Failure to seal Phase II Reports

A PG issued 900 unsealed Phase II reports.

When notified, the PG said that he signed only reports that were submitted to TCEQ. The PG estimated that 400 - 500 total authored Phase II reports were unsealed.

The Board assessed a $5,000 Administrative Penalty for these violations. [Phase II reports MUST be sealed, whether for private clients or for government submission.]

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

PE Firm's Geoscience not signed or sealed

TBPG found that Reports issued by a PE firm were submitted to private clients and TCEQ, but were not signed & sealed by a PE or a PG.

In some reports, no PE sealed the document because they weren't qualified for the geoscience work – a PG needed to seal that work

For others, the PG who did the work left the firm before the reports were final and no other person would take responsible charge of the work

Still others believed that doing geoscience for a PE Firm meant that no seal was required. [Know The Rules!]

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Deceptive Practice

A Registered Firm intentionally and repeatedly renewed the license of a PG who had passed away 10 years earlier.

The Firm also renewed their Firm Registration **9 times** but did not notify TBPG in writing that they changed the PG in Responsible Charge for the firm.

The Board assessed a **$60,000** Administrative Penalty. This penalty is in process.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

Summary

People may be careless when practicing geoscience and filing reports. Everyone must follow the TBPG Rules and the Code of Professional Conduct.

PGs and Firms are responsible for knowing the Rules and the Code of Conduct.

Some of these cases were settled before TBPG's penalty limits were raised. Substantially greater monetary penalties are now being assessed.

RECENT BOARD ACTIVITY

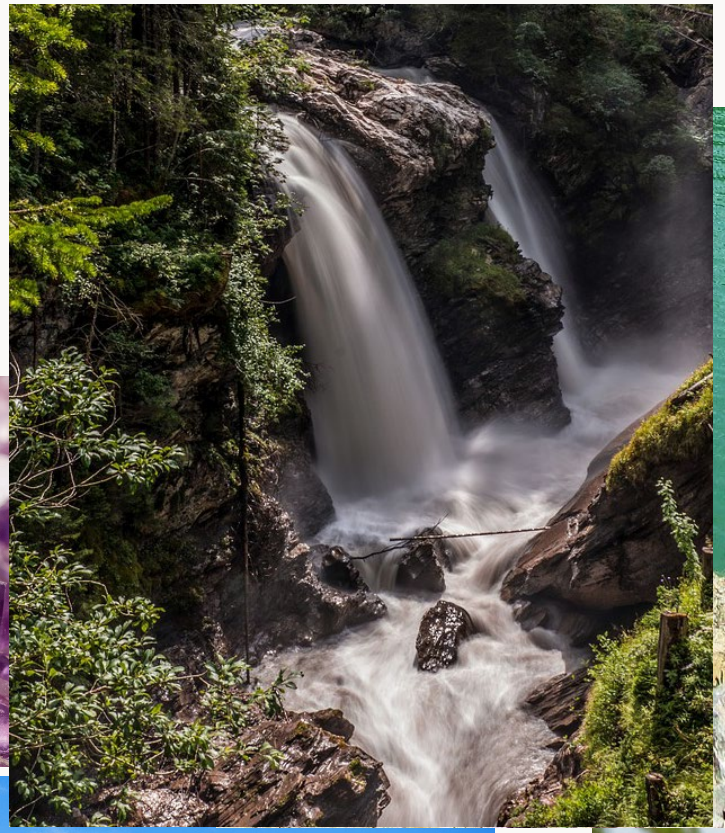
Licensing Statistics May 9, 2025

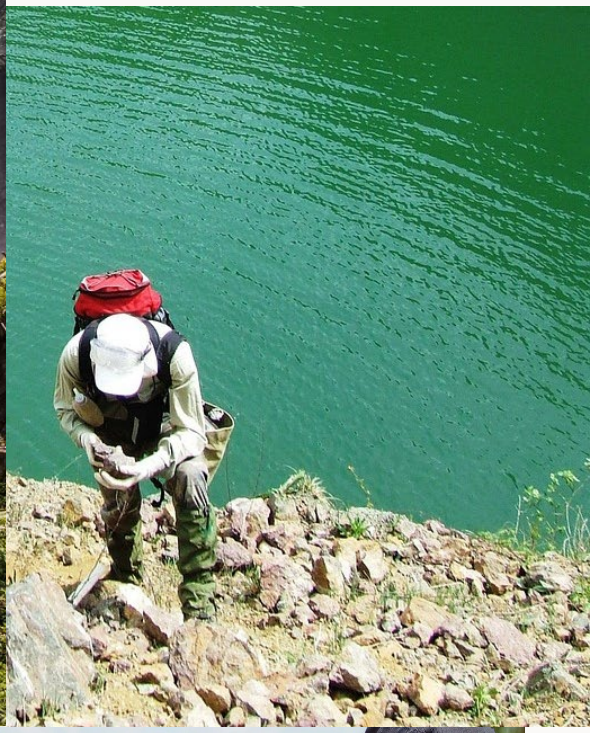
Licensed PGs: 3164 (91% Geol, 6% Geoph, 3% Soils)

1035 – 65 and older

GITs: 235 –63 upgraded to PG in 2024

Licensed Geoscience Firms: 337 – 33 new Firms in 2024





Many new geoscientists will be needed in Texas over the next 50 years

Training can take 4-6years

Students need to get that geoscience education and training now

If you know a student who is interested in geoscience, please encourage and mentor them.

TWO MORE IDEAS…

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

TWO MORE IDEAS…

RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

ETHICS TRAINING IS IMPORTANT

Rules Workshop

WHAT IF YOUR PG LICENSE EXPIRES?

851.28. LICENSE RENEWAL AND REINSTATEMENT

PG Licenses can be renewed up to 3 years after the license expiration date.

Procedures and fees vary according to the time period since expiration.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

851.28. LICENSE RENEWAL AND REINSTATEMENT

If expired less than 60 days: submit Renewal Application (Form B) and pay renewal fee.

If expired 60 days to 10 months: file Form B, pay renewal fee plus $50 late penalty fee. Be sure to submit Form VII declaring whether they practiced as a PG after license expiration. If they did, licensee may face disciplinary action.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

851.28. LICENSE RENEWAL AND REINSTATEMENT

If License expired 10 months to 3 years: Form B, the current year renewal fee, the late penalty fee, and Form VII. Also pay a fee *for each year missed*.

A license expired for 3 years is permanently expired and cannot be renewed. The former licensee may apply for a new license but must meet all licensure requirements and rules at the time of re-application.

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

CLARIFYING THE CONTINUING EDUCATION POLICY

851.32 – CONTINUING EDUCATION

Fulfilling Continuing Education Program (CEP) requirements for professional development is a condition for license renewal

The unit for CEP reporting is the Professional Development Hour (PDH); a clock hour (+/-) of CEP activity

CEP activity is any qualifying course or activity with a clear purpose and objective, to maintain, improve, or expand the skills and knowledge relevant to your field of practice

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

851.32 – CONTINUING EDUCATION

Each year 15 total hours (PDH units) are required

Each year 1 of the PDH must be in professional ethics, or roles and responsibilities of Professional Geoscientists, or review of the Texas Geoscientist Practice Act and TBPG rules

If more than 15 PDH are earned in a year, you can carry forward up to 30 PDH into the following year – but must still earn 1 PDH each year in professional ethics

851.32 – CONTINUING EDUCATION

University credit courses (15 PDH/course hour)

CE courses offered by a professional organization, university, in-house by a corporation, professional society, associations, or similar groups

On-line, televised, videotaped, or other short courses/tutorials

Presenting or attending seminars, presentations made at meetings or conventions, sponsored by a professional society, company, employer, or similar groups

Teaching or instructing a course or seminar for the first time only

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

851.32 – CONTINUING EDUCATION

Authoring published papers, articles, books, or accepted licensing examination items

Active participation in professional or technical societies, associations, or organizations, including:

- Serving as elected or appointed official; on a committee of the organization; or in other official positions
- Maximum 5 PDH per year

Patents issued

Engaging in self-directed course work - maximum 5 PDH per year

Publishing software programs

All CE activities must be relevant to the practice of geoscience and may include technical, ethical, or managerial content

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

HOW TO SIGN AND SEAL YOUR REPORTS ELECTRONICALLY?

§851.156. Professional Geoscientist Seals and Geoscience Firm Identification.

TBPG Rules for Professional Geoscience Licensure September 21, 2022

Page 48

(a) The purpose of the Professional Geoscientist's seal is to show that professional geoscience services were performed by a qualified licensed Professional Geoscientist and to identify the Professional Geoscientist who performed the geoscience services.

(b) The Professional Geoscientist seal shall be of the design shown in this subsection.

Figure: 22 TAC §851.156(b)

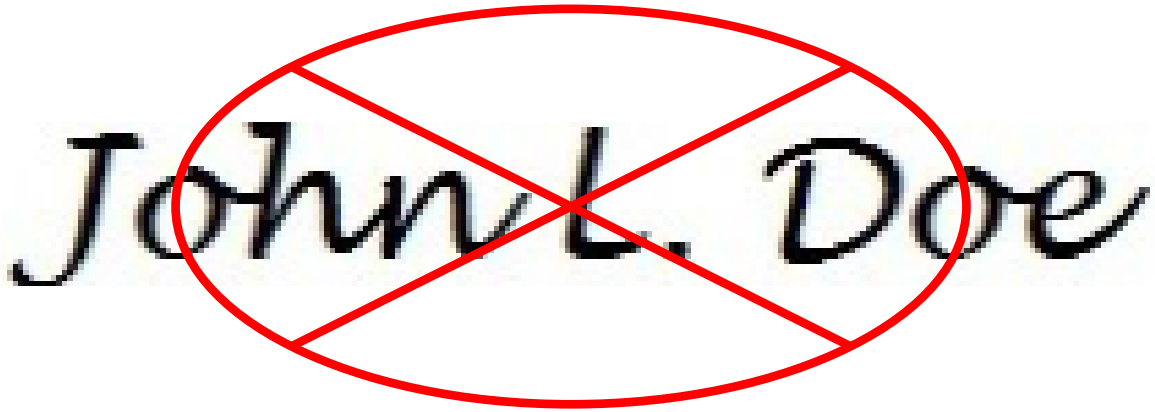
(f) All seals utilized by a license holder shall be capable of leaving a permanent ink or impression on the document.

(g) Electronically conveyed geoscience documents requiring a seal must contain an electronic seal and electronic signature. Such seals should conform to the design requirements set forth in this section.

(1) A Professional Geoscientist must employ reasonable security measures to make the document unalterable. The Professional Geoscientist shall maintain the security of his/her electronic seal and electronic signature. **The following methods are allowed**: (A) The Professional Geoscientist **may electronically copy the original hard copy of the document** that bears his/her seal, original signature, and date **and transmit this document in a secure electronic format**. (B) The Professional Geoscientist **may create an electronic seal and electronic signature for use in transmitting geoscientific documents by making a secure electronic graphic of the Professional Geoscientist's original seal and signature**.

(2) The use of an electronically-generated signature is not allowed by changing the word processing font from a "normal text" to a signature/handwriting font.

(A) Shown below is a **sample of an unauthorized electronically-generated signature** using the Lucida Handwriting font.



© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

(A) Shown below is a sample of a digital image of a geoscientist's seal and original signature saved as a digital image (JPEG Format, for example).

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

(j) **A Professional Geoscientist shall take reasonable steps to ensure the security of the Professional Geoscientist's physical or electronically-generated seals at all times.** In the event of loss of a seal, the Professional Geoscientist will immediately give written notification of the facts concerning the loss to the Executive Director.

(t) **All geoscience documents released, issued, or submitted by a licensee shall clearly indicate the Geoscience Firm name and registration number by which the Professional Geoscientist is employed. If the Professional Geoscientist is employed by a local, State, or Federal Government agency or a firm that is exempt from the requirement of registration under Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 1002, Subchapter H, then only the name of the agency or firm shall be required.**

Thanks to all of you…

The work you perform is important.

Be proud of your role in protecting the environment and the people of Texas

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

TBPG is committed to ensure that only those who meet established standards are licensed to carry out the practice of geoscience in Texas

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

TBPG wants to maintain high-quality geoscience practice in Texas

Sloppy or illegal practice can endanger the public and the credibility of all geoscientists

If you see bad geoscience work, please contact us

© 2025 MARK N. VARHAUG

QUESTIONS? COMPLAINTS?

Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists

George H. W. Bush Building

1800 Congress Ave. Suite 7S-800

Austin, TX 78701

512-936-4410

https://tbpg.state.tx.us