

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2001**

**SESSION LAW 2001-270  
SENATE BILL 395**

AN ACT TO AMEND CERTAIN PROVISIONS UNDER THE LAWS REGULATING PLUMBING AND HEATING CONTRACTORS AND TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS OF PLUMBING, HEATING, AND FIRE SPRINKLER CONTRACTORS TO INCREASE FEES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 87-18 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 87-18. Organization meeting; officers; seal; rules; employment of personnel; acquire property.**

The Board ~~shall~~shall, within 30 days after its ~~appointment~~appointment, meet in the City of Raleigh and organize, and ~~shall~~ elect a ~~chairman and secretary and chairman, secretary, and~~ treasurer, each to serve for one year. Thereafter ~~said~~the officers shall be elected annually. The secretary and treasurer shall give bond approved by the Board for the faithful performance of ~~his~~their ~~duties~~duties in ~~such~~the sum as the Board may, from time to ~~time~~time, determine. The Board shall have a common seal, shall formulate rules to govern its actions, and is hereby authorized to employ ~~such~~ personnel as it may deem necessary to carry out the provisions of this Article. The Board shall have the power to acquire, hold, rent, encumber, alienate, and otherwise deal with real property in the same manner as a private person or corporation, subject only to the approval of the Governor and the Council of State. Collateral pledged by the Board for an encumbrance is limited to the assets, income, and revenues of the Board."

**SECTION 2.** G.S. 87-21 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 87-21. Definitions; contractors licensed by Board; examination; posting license, etc.**

(a) Definitions. – For the purpose of this Article:

- (1) The word "plumbing" is hereby defined to be the system of pipes, fixtures, apparatus and appurtenances, installed upon the premises, or in a building, to supply water thereto and to convey sewage or other waste therefrom.
- (2) The phrase "heating, group number one" shall be deemed and held to be the heating system of a building, which requires the use of high or low pressure steam, vapor or hot water, including all piping, ducts, and mechanical equipment appurtenant thereto, within, adjacent to or connected with a building, for comfort heating.
- (3) The phrase "heating, group number two" means an ~~air conditioning system which consists~~integral system for heating or cooling a building consisting of an assemblage of interacting components producing conditioned air ~~for comfort cooling by the lowering of~~to raise or lower the temperature, and having a mechanical refrigeration capacity in excess of fifteen tons, and which circulates air. Systems installed in single-family residences are included under heating group number three, regardless of size. Holders of a heating group number three license who have heretofore installed systems classified as heating group number two systems may nevertheless service, replace, or make alterations to those installed systems until June 30, 2004.

- (4) The phrase "heating, group number three" shall be deemed and held to be a direct heating or cooling system of a building ~~which produces heat to raise~~ that raises or lowers the temperature of the space within the building for the purpose of comfort in which electric heating elements or products of combustion exchange heat either directly with the building supply air or indirectly through a heat exchanger ~~and using an air distribution system of ducts~~ ducts and having a mechanical refrigeration capacity of 15 tons or less. A heating system requiring air distribution ducts and supplied by ground water or utilizing a coil supplied by water from a domestic hot water heater not exceeding 150 degrees Fahrenheit requires either plumbing or heating group number one license to extend piping from valved connections in the domestic hot water system to the heating coil and requires either heating group number one or heating group number three license for installation of coil, duct work, controls, drains and related appurtenances.
- (5) Any person, firm or corporation, who for a valuable consideration, (i) installs, alters or restores, or offers to install, alter or restore, either plumbing, heating group number one, or heating group number two, or heating group number three, or (ii) lays out, fabricates, installs, alters or restores, or offers to lay out, fabricate, install, alter or restore fire sprinklers, or any combination thereof, as defined in this Article, shall be deemed and held to be engaged in the business of plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler contracting; provided, however, that nothing herein shall be deemed to restrict the practice of qualified registered professional engineers. Any person who installs a plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler system on property which at the time of installation was intended for sale or to be used primarily for rental is deemed to be engaged in the business of plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler contracting without regard to receipt of consideration, unless exempted elsewhere in this Article.
- (6) The word "contractor" is hereby defined to be a person, firm or corporation engaged in the business of plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler contracting.
- (7) The word "heating" shall be deemed and held to mean heating group number one, heating group number two, heating group number three, or any combination thereof.
- (8) Repealed by Session Laws 1997-298, s. 1.
- (9) The word "Board" means the State Board of Examiners of Plumbing, Heating, and Fire Sprinkler Contractors.
- (10) The word "experience" means actual and practical work directly related to the category of plumbing, heating group number one, heating group number two, heating group number three, or fire sprinkler contracting, and includes related work for which a license is not required.
- (11) The phrase "fire sprinkler" means an automatic or manual sprinkler system designed to protect the interior or exterior of a building or structure from fire, and where the primary extinguishing agent is water. These systems include wet pipe and dry pipe systems, preaction systems, water spray systems, foam water sprinkler systems, foam water spray systems, nonfreeze systems, and circulating closed-loop systems. These systems also include the overhead piping, combination standpipes, inside hose connections, thermal systems used in connection with the sprinklers, tanks, and pumps connected to the sprinklers, and controlling valves and devices for actuating an alarm when the system is in operation. This subsection shall not apply to

owners of property who are building or improving farm outbuildings. This subsection shall not include water and standpipe systems having no connection with a fire sprinkler system. Nothing herein shall prevent licensed plumbing contractors, utility contractors, or fire sprinkler contractors from installing underground water supplies for fire sprinkler systems.

(b) Classes of Licenses; Eligibility and Examination of Applicant; Necessity for License. –

- (1) In order to protect the public health, comfort and safety, the Board shall establish two classes of licenses: Class I covering all plumbing, heating, and fire sprinkler systems for all structures, and Class II covering plumbing and heating systems in single-family detached residential dwellings.
- (2) ~~Effective April 15, 1998, the~~ The Board shall establish and issue a fuel piping license for use by persons who do not possess the required Class I or Class II plumbing or heating license, but desire to engage in the contracting or installing of fuel piping extending from an approved fuel source at or near the premises, which piping is used or may be used ~~partly or entirely to supply fuel to plumbing or heating systems or equipment or which, by its installation, may alter or affect the fuel supply to plumbing or heating systems or equipment within the meaning of G.S. 87-21(a).~~ any systems, equipment, or appliances located inside the premises.

The Board may also establish additional restricted classifications to provide for: (i) the licensing of any person, partnership, firm, or corporation desiring to engage in a specific phase of heating, plumbing, or fire sprinkling contracting; (ii) the licensing of any person, partnership, firm, or corporation desiring to engage in a specific phase of heating, plumbing, or fire sprinkling contracting that is an incidental part of their primary business, which is a lawful business other than heating, plumbing, or fire sprinkling contracting; or (iii) the licensing of persons desiring to engage in contracting and installing fuel piping from an approved fuel source on the premises to a point inside the residence.

- (3) The Board shall prescribe the standard of competence, experience and efficiency to be required of an applicant for license of each class, and shall give an examination designed to ascertain the technical and practical knowledge of the applicant concerning the analysis of plans and specifications, estimating costs, fundamentals of installation and design, codes, fire hazards, and related subjects as these subjects pertain to plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler systems. The examination for a fire sprinkler contractor's license shall include such materials as would test the competency of the applicant and which may include the minimum requirements of certification for Level III, subfield of Automatic Sprinkler System Layout, National Institute for Certification of Engineering Technologies (NICET). As a result of the examination, the Board shall issue a certificate of license of the appropriate class in plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler contracting, and a license shall be obtained, in accordance with the provisions of this Article, before any person, firm or corporation shall engage in, or offer to engage in, the business of plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler contracting, or any combination thereof. The obtaining of a license, as required by this Article, shall not of itself authorize the practice of another profession or trade for which a State qualification license is required. Prior to taking the examination, the applicant may be

required by the Board to establish that the applicant is at least 18 years of age and is of good moral character. The Board may require experience as a condition of examination, provided that (i) the experience required may not exceed two years, (ii) that up to one-half the experience may be in the form of academic or technical courses of study, and (iii) that registration is not required at the commencement of the period of experience.

- (4) Conditions of examination set by the Board shall be uniformly applied to each applicant within each license classification. It is the purpose and intent of this section that the Board shall provide an examination for plumbing, heating group number one, or heating group number two, or heating group number three, or each restricted classification, and may provide an examination for fire sprinkler contracting or may accept a current certification of the National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies for Fire Protection Engineering Technician, Level III, subfield of Automatic Sprinkler System Layout.
- (5) The Board is authorized to issue a certificate of license limited to either plumbing or heating group number one, or heating group number two, or heating group number three, or fire sprinkler contracting, or any combination thereof. The Board is also authorized to issue a certificate of license limited to one or more restricted classifications that are established pursuant to this section.
- (6) ~~Each application for examination shall be accompanied by a check, post office money order, or cash, in the amount of the annual license fee required by this Article. Regular examinations~~ Examinations shall be given in the months of April and October of at least twice each year, and additional examinations may be given at such other times as the Board may deem ~~deems~~ wise and necessary. Any person may demand in writing a special examination, and upon payment by the applicant of the cost of holding such examination and the deposit of the amount of the annual license fee, the Board in its discretion will fix a time and place for such examination. Upon satisfactory proof of the applicant's inability to write and upon demand of an applicant for a Class II plumbing or heating license six weeks prior to an examination, the Board shall conduct the examination of that applicant orally, and shall not require that applicant to take a written examination as to examination inquiries answered other than by preparation of diagrams. Signed statements from two reliable citizens resident in the home county of the applicant shall constitute satisfactory proof of an applicant's inability to write. The Board may offer written examinations or administer examinations by computer within 30 days after approving an application. Upon passing the examination and paying the annual license fee, the applicant shall be issued a license. A person who fails to pass any examination shall not be reexamined until the next regular examination after 90 days from the date the person was last examined. The Board may require applicants who fail the examination three times to receive additional education before the applicant is allowed to retake the examination.

(c) To Whom Article Applies. – The provisions of this Article shall apply to all persons, firms, or corporations who engage in, or attempt to engage in, the business of plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler contracting, or any combination thereof as defined in this Article. The provisions of this Article shall not apply to those who make minor repairs or minor replacements to an already installed system of plumbing or heating, but shall apply to those who make repairs, replacements, or modifications to an already installed fire sprinkler system.

(c1) Exemption. – The provisions of this Article shall not apply to a person who performs the on-site assembly of a factory designed drain line system for a manufactured home, as defined in G.S. 143-143.9(6), if the person (i) is a licensed manufactured home retailer, a licensed manufactured home set-up contractor, or a full-time employee of either, (ii) obtains an inspection by the local inspections department and (iii) performs the assembly according to the State Plumbing Code.

(d) Repealed by Session Laws 1979, c. 834, s. 7.

(d1) Expired.

(e) Posting License; License Number on Contracts, etc. – The current license issued in accordance with the provisions of this Article shall be posted in the business location of the licensee, and its number shall appear on all proposals or contracts and requests for permits issued by municipalities. The initial qualified licensee on a license is the permanent possessor of the license number under which that license is issued, except that a licensee, or the licensee's legal agent, personal representative, heirs or assigns, may designate in writing to the Board a qualified licensee to whom the Board shall assign the license number upon the payment of a ten dollar (\$10.00) assignment fee. Upon such assignment, the qualified licensee becomes the permanent possessor of the assigned license number. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the license number may be assigned only to a qualified licensee who has been employed by the initial licensee's plumbing and heating company for at least 10 years or is a lineal relative, sibling, first cousin, nephew, niece, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law of the initial licensee. Each successive licensee to whom a license number is assigned under this subsection may assign the license number in the same manner as provided in this subsection.

(f) Repealed by Session Laws 1971, c. 768, s. 4.

(g) The Board may, in its discretion, grant to plumbing, heating, or fire sprinkler contractors licensed by other states license of the same or equivalent classification without written examination upon receipt of satisfactory proof that the qualifications of such applicants are substantially equivalent to the qualifications of holders of similar licenses in North Carolina and upon payment of the usual license fee.

(h) Expired."

**SECTION 3.** G.S. 87-22 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 87-22. License fee based on population; fee; expiration and renewal; penalty; reinstatement.**

All persons, firms, or corporations engaged in the business of either plumbing or heating contracting, or both, ~~in cities or towns of 10,000 inhabitants or more shall pay an annual license fee not exceeding seventy five dollars (\$75.00), and in cities or towns of less than 10,000 inhabitants an annual license fee not exceeding fifty dollars (\$50.00), to exceed one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00).~~ The annual fee for a piping or restricted classification license shall not exceed that for a plumbing or heating license. All persons, firms, or corporations engaged in the business of fire sprinkler contracting shall pay an initial application fee not to exceed seventy-five dollars (\$75.00) and an annual license fee not to exceed three hundred dollars (\$300.00). In the event the Board refuses to license an applicant, the license fee deposited shall be returned by the Board to the applicant. All licenses shall expire on the last day of December in each year following their issuance or renewal. It shall be the duty of the secretary and treasurer to ~~cause to be mailed~~ send by United States mail or e-mail to every licensee registered hereunder with the Board, notice to the licensee's last known address reflected on the records of the Board of the amount of fee required for renewal of license, ~~such~~ the notice to be mailed at least one month in advance of the expiration of the license. The Board may require payment of all unpaid annual fees before reissuing a license. In the event of failure on the part of any person, firm or corporation to renew the license certificate annually and pay the required fee therefor during the month of January in each year, the Board shall increase the license fee ~~ten per centum (10%) for each month or fraction of a month that payment is delayed; provided that the penalty for nonpayment shall not~~

~~exceed the amount of the annual fee, and provided further that the by twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) to cover any additional expense associated with late renewal. The Board requires shall require~~ reexamination upon failure of a licensee to renew license within three years after expiration. The Board may adopt regulations requiring attendance at programs of continuing education as a condition of license renewal. A licensee employed full time as a local government plumbing, heating, or mechanical inspector and holding qualifications from the Code Officials Qualifications Board may renew the license at a fee not to exceed twenty-five dollars (\$25.00)."

**SECTION 4.** G.S. 87-22.1 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 87-22.1. Examination fees; funds disbursed upon warrant of chairman and secretary-treasurer.**

The Board shall charge ~~an a nonrefundable application and examination fee not exceeding to exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00)~~ one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00) for each ~~regular examination provided, examination, and such~~ the funds collected shall be disbursed upon warrant of the chairman and secretary-treasurer, to partially defray general expenses of the Board. ~~Such~~ The application and examination fee shall be retained by the Board irrespective of whether or not the applicant is granted a license."

**SECTION 5.** Notwithstanding G.S. 87-22 and G.S. 87-22.1, as enacted in Sections 3 and 4 of this act, after this act becomes effective and until changed by permanent rule of the Board, the annual license fee shall be one hundred dollars (\$100.00) and the application and examination fee shall be eighty dollars (\$80.00).

**SECTION 6.** This act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 28<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2001.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue  
President of the Senate

s/ James B. Black  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley  
Governor

Approved 12:12 p.m. this 6<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2001