



Professional Reference Manual

Chapter 17

Version: 1.1

July 2024

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Chapter 17 – Use of the BCLS Seal

Part 1 - Introduction

This chapter provides guidance on the application of physical and digital Seals to Documents. The application of a Seal to Documents that are not intended for filing in public registries shows the land surveyor's professional responsibility for the signed Document. This authentication allows the public to trust and rely on the contents of the Document, as it has been sealed by a BC land surveyor.

Part 2 – Definitions

The following definitions are specific to this chapter of the Professional Reference Manual.

1) Digital Certificate

A certificate issued to a BC land surveyor by a Digital Certificate Provider that verifies the identity of the land surveyor through the use of encryption.

2) Digital Certificate Provider

A third party approved by the ABCLS to issue Digital Certificates to BC land surveyors.

3) Document(s)

Includes any physical or electronic records related to land surveying activities that are not intended for filing in public registries.

4) Seal

The BC land surveyor's Seal is a mark that indicates to a recipient that the documents and contents of that document were prepared by, or under the direct supervision of, the BC land surveyor. It is either the physical Seal or digital Seal and is collectively called "Seal."

Part 3 – BCLS Seal

1) Physical Seal

Going forward, the ABCLS will control the issuance of physical Seals to practising land surveyors. To obtain a physical Seal, a land surveyor in good standing must order it through the ABCLS. Land surveyors who already have physical Seals from different suppliers are permitted to continue using them. Should existing physical Seals require replacement, they must be obtained through the ABCLS.

2) Digital Seal Image

The ABCLS controls the issuance of the Digital Seal Image. In addressing the needs of various Document recipients to verify electronic authentications from land surveyors, the ABCLS has

approved Notarius as the Digital Certificate Provider. Land surveyors can maintain their Digital Certificate by maintaining an annual subscription through the Digital Certificate Provider.



*Figure 1: Example of a legacy
BCLS Physical Seal*



*Figure 2: Example of a BCLS
Physical Seal and Digital Seal Image*

At this time, the LTSA continues to require a digital certificate issued by Juricert for electronic filing of statutory plans.

3) Components of a Valid Seal

For a Seal to be considered valid, three main components must be present:

- i) Application of a personalized Seal that includes the land surveyor's name, commission number and British Columbia Land Surveyor designation.
- ii) Land surveyor's signature; and
- iii) The date of Seal application.

The Seal must only be affixed to Documents that have been prepared by a BC land surveyor or under the direct supervision of a BC land surveyor. Land surveyors must apply Seals personally and must only do so if they are members in good standing with the ABCLS.

Land surveyors may be required to physically or electronically authenticate Documents related to land surveying activities that are not intended for filing at the LTSA, including building location certificates, and certain plans of topography, site plans, and design plans. This applies to Documents that often accompany development-related applications to local governments that are not filed in public registries.

Part 4 - Purpose of Authentication

The purpose of the Seal is to authenticate Documents that are prepared by BC land surveyors or under a BC land surveyor's direct supervision. A Seal is neither a mark of warranty, nor is it a guarantee of

accuracy. Instead, it indicates that the public can rely on the fact that the contents shown were prepared by a BC land surveyor.

The authentication of Documents using a land surveyor's Seal with signature and date verifies that the Documents have not been modified or tampered with, and the authentication further provides that the land surveyor has accepted professional responsibility for the original contents of the Documents.

When applying a Seal and authenticating a Document, the land surveyor is confirming:

- that the work prepared in the Document was prepared by a BC land surveyor or under their direct supervision;
- that the land surveyor is professionally responsible for the Document and its contents;
- the land surveyor's identity;
- the authenticity of the Document;
- the requirements of relevant legislation and regulations, including applicable local bylaws, pertaining to the information the surveyor is authenticating related to the practice of land surveying, have been met;
- the applicable requirements under the *Land Surveyors Act*, the Bylaws (specifically Part E), and the Code of Ethics (specifically items 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13) have been met;
- the land surveyor is in good standing with the ABCLS at the time of Seal application and Document authentication.

Nonpractising land surveyors cannot authenticate Documents. Land surveyors must secure their physical Seals and/or digital Seals and take reasonable steps to prevent their use by another person.

Part 5 - How to Authenticate a Document

The requirement to authenticate Documents applies equally to electronic and physical formats. The Seal is used to authenticate what a land surveyor has taken professional responsibility for and when they took professional responsibility for it. If a Document contains information derived from other sources that are not being certified by the land surveyor, a disclaimer should be added clearly stating what is not being certified. Land surveyors can use a physical Seal accompanied by a wet ink signature and the date of Seal application to authenticate physical Documents if physical Documents are required by the recipient (e.g., local government). The date should be the date of authentication, even though this date may differ from the date the survey was completed.

Land Surveyors may authenticate electronic Documents using a digital Seal in conjunction with a Digital Certificate. To obtain a digital Seal and a Digital Certificate, the land surveyor should complete a subscription form and undergo identity verification approved by both the Digital Certificate Provider and the ABCLS. To digitally authenticate a Document, a land surveyor must:

- apply a digital image of their Seal;
- apply a digital image of their signature in the vicinity of the digital Seal;
- apply a digital image of the date of authentication in the vicinity of the digital Seal; and
- apply their Digital Certificate.

Applying images of a BC land surveyor's seal and signature is not the same as electronically authenticating a Document with a Digital Certificate as they are easy to replicate and do not protect data integrity. Images of a seal and a signature alone are not secure. Without the application of a Digital Certificate, the identity of the land surveyor cannot be verified through the use of encryption. It is the Digital Certificate that confirms the Document was authenticated by a BC land surveyor and that the contents of the Document have not changed since the Digital Certificate was applied.

A land surveyor must not allow another person, under any circumstances, to:

- apply their Digital Certificate; or
- gain access to their Digital Certificate or to any password, PIN, or other factor used to secure access to or control over their Digital Certificate.

Users of a Document that was previously authenticated and delivered by the land surveyor may request copies of the original Document in hard copy or electronic format. Where a copy of an authenticated Document will suffice, the copy does not need to be re-authenticated. A Document that has been physically authenticated may be scanned and transmitted electronically. Where an electronic Document has been digitally authenticated, the electronic file is the original and any printed or scanned reproductions are copies. Land surveyors are cautioned against issuing copies of Documents after they have been authenticated (whether in hard copy, as an electronic PDF file, or in a fax transmission) without proper controls in place to prevent their Seals from being misused by others.

Part 6 - Revised Documents

When an authenticated Document is revised by, or is revised under the direct supervision of, the same land surveyor who was responsible for the originally issued Document, the following applies:

- The act of revising should be clearly indicated on the Document.
- Any revisions should be clearly identified.
- When the land surveyor is ready to accept professional responsibility for the revisions, the land surveyor should authenticate the Document and clearly indicate the date of the authentication.

When an authenticated Document is revised by, or is revised under the direct supervision of, a land surveyor other than the land surveyor who was responsible for the original Document, the following applies:

- The act of revising should be clearly identified on the Document.
- Only the revisions, including all elements of the Document affected by the revisions, should be authenticated. The land surveyor who is accepting professional responsibility for the revisions should clearly indicate the date of the authentication.

By authenticating the revised Document, the land surveyor who authenticates the revisions is responsible only for the revisions. The revisions must be clearly identified because it distinguishes the responsibility between the land surveyor who prepared the original Document and the one taking responsibility for the revised portion of the Document.

Part 7 – File Format Considerations: PDF vs. PDF/A

PDF/A is the standard format for the long-term archiving of PDF documents. It ensures that documents in this format are visually consistent with the originals, while being independent of the tools used to create them. Converting Documents to PDF/A format before applying the Digital Certificate is optional. Once a Document is saved as PDF/A, any modifications made by other parties will void its PDF/A status. Whether saved as PDF or PDF/A, the application of the Digital Certificate allows reverting to the version of the Document that was authenticated by the land surveyor.



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