



## Office of the Professions

### Consumer Information

#### What You Should Know About Land Surveyors and Their Services

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##### What is a land surveyor, and what services do New York licensed land surveyors offer?

A New York licensed land surveyor (LS) is a professional who uses applied mathematics and other technical and research skills to measure and plot:

- the dimensions of any portion of the earth's surface (including natural and other structures);
- the lengths and directions of boundary lines; and
- the contour of the earth's surface.

##### When would I use the services of a land surveyor?

You might employ a licensed LS to:

- perform a boundary survey to verify that a house, additions, and visible water and sewerage systems are on the property as described in the deed;
- determine if one property encroaches on another;
- ensure that a house or addition is within property lines prior to construction or purchase; and
- lay out the individual building lots in a subdivision.

Land surveyors also perform topographic surveys, surveys of bodies of water (hydrographic surveys), and construction layout surveys for buildings and roads.

##### What if my neighbor's property survey shows that their property line appears to be on my property?

**First**, verify that the location of your property lines are based upon a survey performed for you by a licensed land surveyor - and not one done for a former owner of the land. If it is one done for a former owner, you should have a survey made. If there is a discrepancy in the surveys over the location of property lines, have your surveyor contact the surveyor of the adjoining property to see if they can resolve the discrepancy.

If agreement *still* cannot be reached, discuss it with your neighbor to see if you can reach a compromise on the location of the common boundary (such as splitting the overlapping property). Even if a common boundary is agreed upon, you should still contact your attorney to find out if any legal work is needed to formalize the agreement.

If no agreement can be reached, you may wish to settle the matter through the legal system.

##### When *must* I employ a licensed land surveyor?

Generally, you will need the services of an LS any time you need a government official's approval of survey plans (e.g., the approval of a subdivision). An LS is also required to prepare boundary surveys for property conveyances when filed with public officials. These officials can only accept surveying plans stamped and signed by a land surveyor. Check with local government officials such as the county clerk's office or the planning department to determine what you are required to submit.

##### What credentials does a New York licensed land surveyor have?

A licensed New York LS has a minimum of eight years of education/experience credit and has passed both a 14-hour national examination and a two-hour New York State-specific examination.

##### What should I expect as a client of a licensed land surveyor?

You should expect:

- a description of the surveyor's qualifications;
- names of former clients as references;
- a clear and complete description of the work that will be done for you and the products that will be delivered; and
- project schedule and fee.

### What records does my land surveyor maintain? Can anyone else get them?

New York licensed land surveyors must retain for six years all preliminary and final plans, documents, computations, records, and professional evaluations they or their employees prepared, related to the work which the licensee signed and sealed. They may not reveal personally identifiable data or information obtained in a professional capacity without the prior consent of the client. The client may request copies of documents from the licensee which have been prepared for and paid for by the client.

### What can I do to ensure a good professional relationship with my land surveyor?

Make your needs known as clearly as possible and make certain that the surveyor knows why you are having the survey made. For example, when you have a survey of your property done and you want stakes to mark the corners, make sure the land surveyor knows this and has included it in the fee. Ask questions if you are unsure about any elements of the project.

It is strongly suggested that you have a **written contract** that describes the following:

- the work to be done and the services to be provided;
- work schedule;
- completed product; and
- amount and terms of payment of the land surveyor's fee.

### What questions should individuals with disabilities ask about accessing services?

Ask such questions as whether the service location is physically accessible (curb cuts, ramps, restrooms, etc.) as well as whether there is a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) and parking for people with disabilities.

### How do I find a land surveyor?

Ask a friend or relative who has used a land surveyor's services, or check under "Surveyors - Land" in the yellow pages of your phone book. You may also call professional organizations for assistance in identifying their members who offer the services you need. The State Board for Engineering and Land Surveying **cannot** refer you to a practitioner.

### Verifying a New York License

New York licensed professionals must display a current New York registration certificate; this certificate lists the professional's name, address, and dates of the registration period. Land surveyors must reregister every three years to practice in New York. Some professionals also display their original New York license, diploma, licenses from other states, and membership certificates. You may [verify an individual's license and registration](#) on this site.