



# Small Project Forum Journal

## Hidden Standards: What You Don't Know Can Bite You

William B. Tracy, AIA

Building Area Measurement, LLC

Greenwood Village, Colo.

Architects employ published standards as tools for specifying building materials and methods. Their clients also make agreements with others that incorporate published standards. Architects must know certain of those standards because ignorance of them can come back to bite them.

For example, your client can also be a landlord or a real estate manager. Leases typically state the size of the premises or the space to be leased, and the size of the premises is often specified by a published standard like BOMA's standard method of measuring floor area in office building (ANSI/BOMA Z65.1).

Because there are no laws in the U.S. that require landlords to adopt any specific measurement standards, there is wide variation in space measurement practices. Reading the landlord's standard lease is the best way to understand how to measure space for leasing. If the lease cites a measurement standard, the architect must become familiar with it and use its methods and terminology in all area calculations and correspondence.

Architects have been sued by landlords for mistakes in lease area calculations, and those lawsuits tend to be large. Often they are caused not by math errors (CAD is handy this way), but by lack of communication about which standard to apply, or by lack of clear understanding of the provisions of a particular standard.

Because of this liability, many architects put disclaimers on all their area calculations. This can be a problem for landlords. Usually, an architect has better area calculation tools than the landlord does, and also a better understanding of the building. Architects can be of better service to their clients if they master published floor area measurement standards and apply their technology tools (CAD and spreadsheets) to provide reliable lease areas to their clients.

For more information on building area measurement practices and standards, see [www.BuildingAreaMeasurement.com](http://www.BuildingAreaMeasurement.com).

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