

# CONTINUING EDUCATION AT GSPE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

Jerry D. Kahn, P.E., CMRP. F.NSPE<sup>1</sup> and Patrick B. Rhodes, P.E.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BE&K, Fayetteville, Georgia, USA, [jdkahn@bellsouth.net](mailto:jdkahn@bellsouth.net)

<sup>2</sup>PACE Geotechnical, McDonough, Georgia, USA, [pat@pacegeotech.com](mailto:pat@pacegeotech.com)

## **Abstract**

*Engineers are by their nature inquisitive and life-long learners. Professional engineers (PEs) must be life-long learners if they want to maintain their professional licenses. After four (or more) years of college study, working under a PE for at least four years, and passing two intensive exams, the engineer can be granted a PE license from their state's licensing board. As required for retention of their licenses, PEs must continually maintain and improve their skills through continuing education. This paper provides an overview of the continuing education requirements for professional engineers and summarizes the specific requirements for the state of Georgia. The role of the Georgia Society of Professional Engineers (GSPE) in providing educational opportunities is described.*

## **Professional Licensure**

A professional engineer (PE) is a person who has been licensed in a specific discipline or branch of engineering by his/her state regulatory board based on education, experience, and examination. The purpose of licensure is to protect the public from unqualified practitioners. To become a licensed professional, an engineer must

- Earn a four-year degree in engineering from an accredited university
- Pass a Fundamentals of Engineering exam
- Complete from four or more years of progressive experience under a PE
- Pass a Principles and Practice of Engineering exam

While specific requirements vary from state to state, in general they follow the model law and rules promulgated by the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES).

## **Continuing Professional Competency**

The rapid pace of technological change can render an engineer's know-how obsolete if not continually reinforced. To ensure that the professional engineer maintains his/her continued professional competency (CPC), most states require the engineer to verify that he/she has undertaken a specified amount of continual learning in their field of practice. The engineer does this by accumulating professional development hours (PDHs). These PDHs can be earned through attending college courses, participating in seminars or short courses that offer continuing education units (CEUs), by teaching professional development courses, publishing papers and books, through active participation in professional and technical societies, by authoring patents, or by attending presentations made at meetings, conventions or conferences.

## **Georgia Requirements**

The requirements for continued professional competency in the state of Georgia are set by the Georgia Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. The governing documents include O.C.G.A 43-15-6(b) and Board Rule 180-11. Professional engineers

licensed in Georgia are required to earn 30 PDHs in a biennial period. All activities must be relevant to the practice of engineering within the engineer's field of practice. While the registered engineer need only certify that he/she has met the requirements when renewing their license, they are responsible for maintaining a log of PDH activities and attendance records. These records must be maintained for four years and are subject to an audit.

### **GSPE and Continuing Education**

The Georgia Society of Professional Engineers has been providing educational opportunities to its members since 1944. The commitment of the Georgia Society of Professional Engineers (GSPE) to continuing education is embodied in Goal 3 of its strategic plan "Provide member value through education, career development and networking opportunities". The society provides education by offering professional seminars in four different venues:

- An annual PDH Saturday at a regional college,
- In conjunction with the Georgia Engineers Summer Conference,
- At local chapter meetings throughout the state, and
- Active participation in GSPE.

By regularly participating in these activities, the Georgia Professional Engineer can easily accumulate the requisite number of PDHs. In most cases, the PHDs earned through GSPE are also recognized by regulatory boards in other states.

### **References**

Berson, B and Benner, D. (2007). Career Success in Engineering. Kaplan Publishing.

Georgia Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. Instructions for Meeting Requirements of Continuing Professional Competency, O.C.G.A. 43-15-6(b) and Board Rule 180-11., Georgia Secretary of State. <http://sos.georgia.gov/Plb/Pels/conted.htm>

Humphreys, K.(1999). What Every Engineer Should Know About Ethics. Marcel Decker.

Kahn, J. (2006). GSPE News. The Georgia Engineer Magazine, pp.50-51, Oct/Nov 2006.

NCEES (2007) Model Law

[http://www.ncees.org/introduction/about\\_ncees/ncees\\_model\\_law.pdf](http://www.ncees.org/introduction/about_ncees/ncees_model_law.pdf)

Nelson J. and Price, B (2007). The Future of Professional Licensure. PE Magazine, pp 30-34 , NSPE, June 2007.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

**Patrick B. Rhodes:** Vice-President & Senior Engineer, PACE Geotechnical, Inc, McDonough, Georgia, B.S. and M.S. in civil engineering (1994, 1996) from The Georgia Institute of Technology, Professional Engineer licensed in the states of Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, and Mississippi. President of the Georgia Society of Professional Engineers.

**Jerry D. Kahn:** Reliability Manager, BE&K, Fayetteville, Georgia, USA. B.S. and M.S. in chemical engineering (1969, 1974) from Michigan Technological University; MBA from City University of Seattle (1985). Professional engineer licensed in the states of Georgia and Washington. Past president of the Georgia Society of Professional Engineers. Fellow of the National Society of Professional Engineers.