



NCEES

advancing licensure for
engineers and surveyors

P.O. Box 1686 (280 Seneca Creek Rd.), Clemson, SC 29633 USA T: (864) 654-6824 F: (864) 654-6033 NCEES.ORG

2009-10
BOARD OF DIRECTORS/OFFICERS

June 24, 2010

David L. Whitman, Ph.D., P.E.
President

Henn Rebane, P.E.
Past President

Leonard J. Timms Jr., P.E.
President Elect

Gene L. Dinkins, P.E., P.L.S.
Treasurer

Dale A. Jans, P.E.
VP Central Zone

David H. Widmer, P.L.S.
VP Northeast Zone

Govind Nadkarni, P.E.
VP Southern Zone

Patrick J. Tami, P.L.S.
VP Western Zone

Jerry T. Carter
Executive Director

The Honorable Michael Bromwich
Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy (formerly MMS)
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Bromwich,

The leadership of the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) is writing to congratulate you on your appointment as director of the new Bureau of Ocean Energy. We echo Director of the Interior Salazar's thoughts that the overhaul of the former MMS offers the opportunity for the new BOE to "have the standards and the enforcement to be able to do job that it needs to do."

We at NCEES believe that professional engineers can play an important role at the BOE. Professional engineers are required to meet minimum standards in education and experience in addition to passing a series of standardized exams. Just as importantly, PEs are obligated by their license to practice the engineering profession in a manner that protects the public's health, safety, and welfare. If they do not do this, they are subject to having their licenses revoked by state licensing boards.

We encourage you to utilize the protections that already exist in the engineering licensure system by requiring that PEs play a greater role in your department's inspection and enforcement procedures. We feel that your appointment to lead the new Bureau of Ocean Energy represents an excellent opportunity to do this.

We are a nation that relies on standards, particularly when the practice of a profession has the potential to affect the lives of many individuals. When standards are not promulgated, we run a greater risk of enduring incidents such as what is occurring in the Gulf of Mexico. While your department cannot go back and prevent what has already happened, it can use its regulatory authority to ensure that the people who oversee offshore drilling activities are able to demonstrate the technical expertise and commitment to the public welfare that help ensure that such activities do not sacrifice the well-being of our nation's citizens.

Sincerely,

David L. Whitman, Ph.D., P.E.
NCEES President

Jerry T. Carter
NCEES Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Ken Salazar
United States Secretary of the Interior

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jerry Carter
NCEES Executive Director
(864) 654-6824 ext. 5470
jcarter@ncees.org

Professional engineers provide the needed link between industry and public welfare

Two months after oil began leaking into the Gulf of Mexico, it is now clear to the American public that their health, safety, and welfare can fall victim to bottom-line driven business decisions. This is particularly true when corporations such as BP, while operating in a climate of lax enforcement, fail to pursue properly qualified technical expertise.

In response to the unresolved Deepwater Horizon blowout, the Department of the Interior is in the process of implementing several new regulations on activities on the Outer Continental Shelf. One of the measures outlined in NTL No. 2010-N05, "National Notice to Lessees and Operators of Federal Oil and Gas Leases, Outer Continental Shelf," specifies that a professional engineer (PE) must certify all well casing designs and cementing procedures and verify that designs are appropriate for expected wellbore conditions. This is a much-needed requirement, and we should all hope that the proper steps are taken to ensure that it is enacted. We should also hope that similarly qualified professionals are called on more often to make informed judgments during the enforcement stage.

PEs, many of whom are employed in the private sector, demonstrate that business activities need not sacrifice the interests of the public. Professional engineers are licensed at the state level; they must meet education and experience requirements in addition to passing a standardized examination program. To maintain the license, a PE must adhere to a strict code of conduct, with the primary charge being to practice the profession in a manner that protects the health, safety and welfare of the public. A PE who violates this obligation is subject to losing his or her license.

Under model rules developed by the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) and required by many states, a PE is obligated to notify authorities if his or her professional judgment is overruled under circumstances where the life, health, property, or welfare of the public is endangered. Unfortunately, cost considerations can prevent corporations from requesting the services of a PE unless they are compelled to do so.

It should be obvious by now that the millions of Americans who will be affected by the oil spill could have benefited from requiring the parties responsible to secure a professional engineer's sealed approval. While we can't go back and prevent what has already happened, we can work to ensure that the proper steps are taken to prevent similar disasters. Oil drilling is only one of many areas where professional engineers can be called on to ensure that business activities do not ignore the public welfare.

David Whitman, Ph.D., P.E.
NCEES President

Jerry Carter
NCEES Executive Director

ABOUT NCEES

NCEES is a national nonprofit organization composed of engineering and surveying licensing boards representing the United States and its territories. An accredited standards developer with the American National Standards Institute, NCEES develops, scores, and administers the examinations used for engineering and surveying licensure throughout the United States. NCEES also provides services facilitating professional mobility for licensed engineers and surveyors. Its headquarters is located in Clemson, S.C.

###