



# Certification... The Beginning or the End?

Report and Commentary from the Ad Hoc Certification Administration Committee

National Council of Structural Engineers Associations

NCSEA news

By the time you have the opportunity to read this, the Member Organization delegates of NCSEA will have received copies of a report on structural engineering certification prepared by the *ad hoc* Certification Administration Committee. The document is a compilation of the work of several NCSEA committees. It provides information regarding the feasibility of certification, both as a program and financially, as well as drafts of proposed bylaws and policies and procedures.

The certification project was initiated in 1999, and gained momentum at the 2000 NCSEA Annual Conference with the appointment of a committee charged with drafting a certification model. This committee presented their work to the Member Organizations in a series of meetings held around the country, culminating in a presentation of their report to the NCSEA Member Organizations at the 2002 Annual Conference in Chicago. Their body of work, along with the work of the NCSEA Past-Presidents' Business Plan Committee, forms the basis for the *pro forma* certification program that will be presented for discussion at the 2003 Annual Conference, October 23-25, and for a letter ballot vote following the Conference.

The presentation of the *ad hoc* Certification Administration Committee's work at the 2003 Annual Conference will mark the end of a long and emotionally-charged process. All that remains is for the NCSEA membership to make their decision on whether certification is appropriate for the structural engineering profession. At the Conference, opponents may express their fear that certification will dilute separate licensing and confuse the public. Proponents will argue that separate licensing is limited to too few jurisdictions, is based on non-uniform standards, and is increasingly difficult to implement in jurisdictions where it is not already law. Both, however, want the same end result, i.e., qualified structural engineers, tested and proven by examination and experience.

## Certification as Opposed to Separate Licensing

It is generally agreed that separate licensing is the best method to protect the public. However, very few jurisdictions require separate licensing and only three of those jurisdictions limit the practice of structural engineering to those so licensed. The remaining jurisdictions restrict only the use of the title. Furthermore, there is not a uniform standard of qualifications among the jurisdictions that have separate licensing, making comity nearly impossible.

Certification, as proposed, will be based on a uniform set of requirements determined by the profession. Although it will not immediately protect the public, it is expected that it will raise the public's awareness and may lead to the adoption of separate licensing laws where there are none. If we are serious about protecting the public, then what choice is there but to license or certify those who would practice the profession?

## Financial Feasibility

The *ad hoc* Certification Administration Committee surveyed 4800 structural engineers, representing every state and experience level. Managers, design engineers, junior engineers, educators, and even retirees were polled. The data substantiates the assumption made last year by the NCSEA Past-Presidents' Business Plan Committee, i.e., that approximately 6500 structural engineers are likely to participate within the first 5 years of enactment. The data also supports the assumption that the fees structural engineers would pay for certification, along with the yearly renewals, would be adequate to operate the program.

## Either Way, We Need to Commit

If we are not willing to support a certification program, then we must be willing to commit the sizable funds that will be required in order to change the licensing laws in the 52 U.S. jurisdictions that do not have a practice act. On the other hand, if we are willing and vote to establish a certification program, we must

be willing to promote it. As employers, we may have to fund our employees. Will we do that? Survey data suggests that we will, but everyone knows that answering an email survey is one thing, writing a check is another.

## Yea or Nay

If you are willing to participate in a certification program, you should encourage your delegate to vote for the establishment of the certification program. If you are not willing to participate in the program, you should encourage your delegate to vote against it. It is that simple.

*The Ad Hoc Certification Administration Committee's report, as well as the Certification Model and reprints of STRUCTURE articles on the subject, are available at [www.ncsea.com](http://www.ncsea.com).*

## Annual Conference

### Hotel Information

Marriott Denver City Center  
1701 California Street  
Denver, Colorado 80202



For reservations, call the Marriott Reservations Center at 800-228-9290, call the hotel directly at 303-297-1300, or visit [www.Marriott.com](http://www.Marriott.com). Use group code SEASEEA. Single or double room rate: \$139 plus 13.45% tax. Mention NCSEA to receive this special room rate. This room rate is guaranteed only through September 30, 2003.

### Airfare Information

Discounted airfares are available for travel to and from Denver on United Airlines, or United Express, between October 19 and October 29, 2003. Receive 5% off the lowest applicable discount fare, or 10% off the unrestricted coach fare. An additional 5% discount will apply when tickets are purchased at least 30 days in advance of your travel date. To receive these special fares, you or your travel agent must call the United Airlines Meeting Reservations Center at 800-521-4041. Refer to Meeting ID 516BG.





**National Council of Structural Engineers Associations  
Eleventh Annual Conference ♦ Denver, Colorado ♦ October 23 - 25, 2003**

*Earth, Wind & Snow: Challenges from Mountain and Plain*  
**Preliminary Program Highlights**

**Keynote Address: Architecture and Engineering: A Narrative of Broad Experience and Insight**

John Anderson, FAIA - Anderson Mason Dale Architects

**Modeling in Three Dimensions - The Future Design and Construction Tools**

Trailer Martin, SE - John A. Martin Associates  
Jason Lien, PE - Rocky Mountain Prestress, Inc.

**Heave and Plunge - Two Case Studies of Failed Drilled Shaft Foundations in the Denver Area**

James R. Harris, PhD, PE - J.R. Harris and Company

**Wind Engineering Applications in Mountainous and Special Wind Regions**

Jon A. Peterka, PhD, PE - Cermak Peterka Petersen, Inc.

**Snow Loads Panel Discussion**

Richard J. Cunningham, PE - S.A. Miro, Inc.  
Jeffrey L. Tirey, PE - Tirey & Associates, P.C.  
David Grandpre, PE - C.A. Pretzer Associates, Inc.

**A Guide to the Specification for Architecturally Exposed Structural Steel**

Jack Petersen, PE - Martin/Martin, Inc.  
William G. Zimmerman II, PE - Zimkor Industries, Inc.

**National Building Design Coalition Report**

Michael Tylk, SE - NCSEA Past President

Friday lunch sponsored by AISC

Featured presentation: *Steel Crazy After All These Years*

Charles J. Carter, SE, PE - American Institute of Steel Construction

Saturday Breakfast sponsored by Research Engineers International

Featured presentation: *Modeling, Analysis, Design and GA Drawings under an Integrated Building Information Management System*

Ben Parikh - REI and Tekla

Saturday lunch sponsored by PCA

Featured presentation: *Efficient Concrete Structures*

David N. Bilow, SE, PE - Portland Cement Association

**CASE Report: Guideline Addressing Coordination and Completeness of Structural Construction Documents**

Tom Wosser, SE - Degenkolb Engineers

**Report on Code Developments**

Jim Delahay - Code Advisory Committee Chairman  
Melvyn Green - Subcommittee Chairman, Existing Buildings/Structural Retrofit  
John Loscheider - NFPA Technical Coordinating Committee Representative

**National Building Design Coalition Report**

Mike Tylk, SE - NCSEA Past President

**Committee Report: Structural Engineering Emergency Response Plan (SEERP)**

August Domel, Jr. - Committee Chair

**Report from TISP - The Infrastructure Security Partnership**

Jon Schmidt

**Applied Technology Council Report**

Jim Delahay - ATC Vice President

**NCSEA Business Meeting**

**Certification Discussion**

**NCSEA Board of Directors Meeting**

**Private Tours and Dinner in the Mountain Ranch Club at Coors Field**



**REGISTRATION FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Companion \_\_\_\_\_

Firm \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fax ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Delegate from \_\_\_\_\_  
Member Organization \_\_\_\_\_

**Member Registration - \$495 per person**

Registration fee includes Thursday evening Welcoming Reception, Professional Program, Trade Exhibits, breakfast, lunch and refreshment breaks on Friday and Saturday, Friday evening tour and dinner at Coors Field and Saturday evening dinner at the Closing Awards Banquet.

**Companion Registration - \$225 per person**

Companion fee includes Thursday evening Welcoming Reception, Friday continental breakfast, Friday evening tour and dinner at Coors Field, Saturday continental breakfast, and Saturday evening dinner at the Closing Awards Banquet.

**Total Amount Enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  Visa  MasterCard  American Express

Disability Requirements? \_\_\_\_\_

**If paying by check, mail check payable to NCSEA, with this completed Registration Form, to:  
NCSEA · Suite 2010 · 203 North Wabash Avenue · Chicago, Illinois 60601.**

**If paying by credit card, fax this completed Registration Form to NCSEA at 312-372-5673.**

For further information and details about NCSEA's many activities, please visit [www.ncsea.com](http://www.ncsea.com) or contact us at:  
NCSEA 203 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2010, Chicago, IL 60601  
P: 312.372.8035 F: 312.372.5673 E: [office@ncsea.com](mailto:office@ncsea.com)

