

Editorial | Why Attend a Technical Committee Meeting at the Structures 2012 Congress?

By Professor Dennis R. Mertz, Ph.D., P.E.



Later this month, over 1000 structural engineers will gather in Chicago for the Structures 2012 Congress, March 29-31, 2012 at the Fairmont Chicago, Millennium Park. Few cities have a richer variety of structural engineering achievements than Chicago. From the staggering high-rise buildings to the network of bridges and other infrastructure, this year's Structures Congress attendees will be surrounded by inspiration. The technical program will feature eleven tracks of technical sessions with current insights about buildings, bridges, and non-building structures from structural engineering leaders. In addition, attendees can enjoy multiple networking opportunities, well-respected keynote speakers, the ability to earn up to 25.5 PDHs, and a comprehensive exhibit hall.

Do you know that most of the Structural Engineering Institute's (SEI) Technical Administrative Division (TAD) technical committees meet during the annual Structures Congress? One of the unique elements of the Structures Congress is the breadth and number of technical committee meetings that occur concurrently. This gives attendees the opportunity to sample some of the initiatives that committees will be working on during the coming year. In addition to the various tracks of familiar technical sessions full of interesting presentations, the SEI technical committees meet to conduct their business. The purpose of the TAD is to "advance the science of structural design by increasing the knowledge of the physical properties of engineering materials, developing methods of analysis, studying the relative merits of various types of structures and methods of fabricating, and disseminating knowledge relating to this division of the engineering profession." In order to accomplish this purpose, the executive committee of the TAD oversees more than sixty technical committees, subcommittees and task committees under nine technical administrative committees (TAC): Analysis and Computation; Bridges; Concrete and Masonry Structures; Dynamic Effects; Metals; Performance of Structures; Special Design Issues; Life-Cycle Performance,

Safety, Reliability and Risk of Structural Systems; and Wood. Many of these committees meet during the Structures Congress, and most of their meetings are open to Congress attendees.

Why would you wish to attend one of these meetings, you ask. You can see the inner workings of the TAD and its committees by attending a committee meeting, and you can contribute to these efforts. The committees "develop technical publications, technical sessions for conferences including future

Structures Congresses, specialty conferences, provide articles for journals, manuals of practice, committee reports and more." Attendance and participation in a technical committee meeting during your stay at the Structures Congress provides you with access to the technical, educational, and professional issues needed to advance and succeed in your area of practice. The technical committee meetings highlight the newest developments in research and practice in their areas of expertise as the committee agendas feature up-to-the minute topics, not issues based upon abstract and paper submissions from months ago.

More importantly, the SEI is looking for the participation of all of the members to enhance the activities of their technical committees and the Institute in general. You can contribute to these activities through attendance, participation and perhaps ultimately membership in one of these technical committees. Committee participation not only enhances your perspective, skills and expertise, but you can enhance the committee's activities by bringing your unique insights and experiences to the committee. In recent years, technical committee members have developed several committee reports and manuals of practice on subjects such as concrete transmission poles, tension fabric structures, and structural identification of constructed systems. In addition, committee members contribute to the development of a wide range of TAD Special Projects. Currently there are special projects on performance-based design for fire loads, composite structures, and regional design forums to help create a generational dialogue between experienced structural engineering professionals and younger members. These projects would not have reached fruition without the help of dedicated committee members who volunteer their time.

So, when you come to the Structures Congress, why not select a technical committee of interest to you and plan to attend their meeting. A list of technical committees, subcommittees and task committees with their mission statements and chairs is included on the TAD page of the SEI website (www.asce.org/SEI). The schedule of technical committee meetings can be found in the Structures 2012 Congress final program. This schedule is also available on the SEI (www.asce.org/SEI) and Structures 2012 Congress (www.structurescongress.org) websites. Attend a technical committee meeting at the Structures Congress, improve yourself and improve the Institute. ■



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