



What Should We Expect In The Coming Year?

By Robert Paullus, P.E., SECB, NCSEA President

NCSEA recently held its 16th Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Thanks to our hosts, the Structural Engineers Association of Ohio (SEAO), we were able to offer two full days of interesting and worthwhile educational topics. In addition, forums were held on the subjects of Continuing Education, Licensing, and Ethics, and NCSEA had the opportunity to introduce its Model Code of Ethics.

Most of us can quickly identify the issues before us as structural engineers: Quality assurance, better basic and continuing education, simplification of codes, ethics, uniform licensure, and more effective response to disasters, are a few of those issues. Articles about a number of others appear each month in this magazine, from BIM and green building design, to the search for more economical and efficient ways to deliver our designs to clients in a changing economy. Addressing these issues is the reason the state Member Organizations (MO's) and NCSEA were formed.

As Past President Ed Huston outlined in his opening remarks at the conference, NCSEA's strength lies in its MO's with their individual members. We are a grassroots organization. Recognizing this at its 2007 Annual Conference, NCSEA sought to strengthen and encourage individual MO's by asking them to share their ideas, to talk over their high points and their low points, and to tell others how they addressed their own MO challenges. MO's who were prospering were asked to communicate the "how" and "why" of their successes to MO's who have yet to get there. The end result benefited NCSEA members throughout the past year and will continue to do so in the year to come. MO delegates talked of what they learned from these meetings and asked to do it again. NCSEA continued with its grassroots initiative at its 2008 Annual Conference, through MO forums on ethics, licensing and education, because NCSEA as an organization thrives on solutions that start at the local level. And for this year's plenary session and workshops, NCSEA chose to address another topic that touches every structural engineer: The International Codes and

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Harman (Q/A), David Bonowitz (Existing Buildings) and Bill Warren (Evaluation Service), hosted breakout sessions to seek input on committee activities for the upcoming (2012) code cycle and to mobilize member organization participation in their activities.

What will we face in the coming year? You decide, to the extent you can. Be proactive. Be a part of a positive solution. No doubt the coming year will bring new challenges, including earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, new information, new pressures from those who would seek to impose on us additional restrictions and requirements, new economic challenges, as well as challenges that we cannot foresee. What will you do to meet these challenges? Individual engineers in individual state organizations can and do make a difference. You only have to decide how much of a difference you want to make. Your state or region has its own issues and concerns and, with that, its own areas of expertise. Think about how you can share that expertise. Then do it! One way to share expertise is through the Winter Institute. NCSEA's Florida MO will share some of its members' expertise on wind engineering during the January 2009 Winter Institute in Miami (see this month's NCSEA News, on pages 76-77 for more information); and the RWDI laboratory in Miramar will be opening its doors, so that registrants can learn, firsthand, how wind engineering tests are conducted. Maybe your MO or other engineering group has a special engineering expertise or project that can be shared and learned from, at the next Winter Institute. Have you thought about it? Is it something that you can explore and then bring to the NCSEA Continuing Education Committee, or another appropriate NCSEA Committee? Whether it is an idea for a Winter Institute, production of a design manual, development of a standard of practice for your area, or a white paper on needed code changes in a particular area of design, every organization and chapter has some issue that it could address in the coming year. If your MO or engineering organization has not undertaken a specific project or topic, I encourage you to select one for the coming year. If each MO tackled only one issue, at the end of the year, we would have more than 40 completed tasks, projects, design guides, or papers. This is the knowledge base for practicing structural engineers. Yes, this is again a call to get involved. Individuals working collectively do make the difference. I am excited to see what advancements we can make in the coming year. Whether it is at the local or national level, come join us in being a part of the future of structural engineering. ■



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