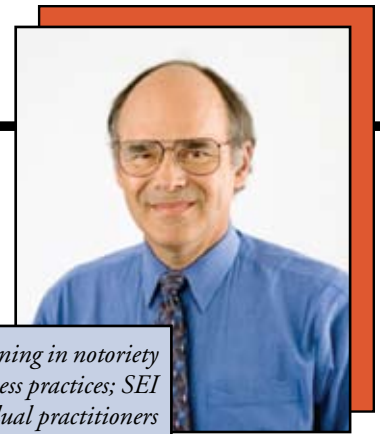


Moving Forward Together Takes Everyone's Help

By Chris D. Poland, S.E.
2007-09 Chairman, CASE



We are making good progress as structural engineers. Not only is there plenty of work for all of us to do, we are gaining in notoriety while improving our ability to work together. CASE remains focused on issues surrounding firms and their business practices; SEI serves as the training, research and development arm of our associations with direct focus on the needs of individual practitioners and researchers; NCSEA continues to knit together our state SEA's and remains focused on licensing, public relations, and code development. It appears that the days of significant overlap and noisy interaction are just about over. That's good, and I hope you are active in all three associations.

The Council of American Structural Engineers (CASE) is celebrating its 20th year as a coalition formed under the wings of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC). Formed in response to a professional liability insurance emergency, CASE brought together the resources of a variety of insurance companies and firms to develop new practice guidelines and standards that not only helped solve the problem, but has led to a multifaceted organization with a mission to *be the leading provider of business practice and risk management resources for structural engineering firms.*

Clear, concise, and appropriate contracts are at the foundation of good business and risk management. The CASE contracts committee continues to review and update their 16 standard contracts with an eye toward adding proper language about using BIM. They have also restored our working relationship with AIA, and are now reviewing the new AIA e-building series of digital practice contracts.

There is no end of clients looking for more service than fees will cover, nor engineers afraid not to do all they are asked to do out of fear of a liability claim. Protection from both comes from a clear understanding of the "state of the practice" that leads to an appropriate scope of work and proper fees to cover the work to be done. CASE Guidelines are available that cover the key aspects of the practice from the basic work of the structural engineer of record and the work assigned to the specialty structural engineer, to guidance on coordination and completeness, special inspections, report preparations, and many more. There are more than a dozen guidelines that clearly spell out our responsibility and best practices, with more in preparation. Check the CASE web site, www.acec.org/case for more information on these guidelines and all other CASE products and services.

Risk management is a daily activity that must reach all levels of the practice, from the senior principal through the engineers and over to the CAD staff. The CASE Risk Management Program, working in partnership with SEI, continues to develop useful, hands on risk management tools, publishes a biweekly newsletter filled with risk management reminders that are sent to all identified members of your staff, and convenes Risk Management Convocations that deal with real-time problems and practical solutions that can be transferred into

each of our practices. This year, we are branching out and will hold two convocations. One at the ACEC fall meeting in September focused on issues of interest to firm principals, and the other in November that will focus on the issues close to the project managers.

Legislative advocacy is the fourth leg on which CASE stands. With a newly activated Legislative Committee, CASE is making our voice as structural engineers heard both locally and at the national level. It's important that our concerns are heard about frivolous lawsuits, good Samaritan protection, post-disaster services liability protection, the need for focused research leading to improvements in what we do and that will lead to new guidelines and standards,

and more. We are rushing toward a world that needs to be sustainable. The built environment is the biggest consumer of natural resources and the largest contributor of carbon. The design professions have the opportunity to make the greatest impact on achieving sustainability. Our job is to figure out how to use the least material possible, and reuse as much as possible. Many of us believe that there is unnecessary conservatism and we need research to remove it – and guidelines and standards to show the way. With ACEC and ASCE government affairs' muscle, we have a ready-made and highly regarded staff that will help carry our legislative initiatives forward.

Your job, my fellow structural engineer, is to join and be active in the professional work we do together. CASE, SEI, and NCSEA all carry important tasks, all pieces to the puzzle that will lead to better designs, better practitioners, and a valued position within the design team. You need to be involved in each as a student, and supporter, an advocate for what you need, and as a participant in the development of solutions. Add ACEC and CASE to your firm's memberships and participate on one of the many committees, add ASCE and SEI to your personal memberships and maintain a life long learning habit, and remain active in your local SEA. ■

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