

AUGUST 2011 MEETING

Wednesday, August 10, 2011 (1.0 PDH)

WORKSHOP

Ethics

Speaker: David Howell, P.E., Director of Licensing for the Texas Board of Professional Engineers, Tel. 512-440-7723.

David Howell is the Director of Licensing for the Texas Board of Professional Engineers. He has over 20 years of engineering experience working for the State of Texas, five of them with the Board. As the Director of the Licensing Division, he oversees the review of all PE applications, Firm registrations, EIT certifications and renewals in the State of Texas. The Licensing division reviews more than 2,500 PE applications per year and handles the renewals for close to 54,000 licensed Texas PEs and approximately 8,400 registered engineering Firms. The Licensing division also coordinates the exams for more than 6,900 examinees each year. David earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas, El Paso. Prior to coming to the Board, his work was primarily in the field of environmental engineering.



WORKSHOP SUMMARY

To an audience of about 85 at the HESS Club, Mr. Howell presented a one-hour workshop on ethics designed to fulfill the Texas Board of Professional Engineers' annual one-hour ethics requirement needed to maintain a PE license. Aided by his slide presentation, Mr. Howell spoke about recent changes in the TBPE organization, recent Texas legislature law changes, and disciplinary case histories. He also answered numerous questions about the TBPE's philosophy and interpretation of its rules.

Some points made by Mr. Howell during the workshop included:

- The inception of PE licensing and many of the Ethics rules originated from catastrophes
- PE's can only practice in areas of competence. The judgment of competence is left to the engineer and is not explicitly defined
- Legislative attempts to abolish the TBPE and consolidate with other agencies failed. The TBPE will continue to act as the licensing agency for PE's.
- Important clarifications and definitions segregating the practices of engineering and architecture were legislated.
- Legislation mandating a special license for Structural Engineers (SE) in Texas failed.
- Major changes (HB3) to the windstorm inspection program are being generated at this time. These changes are expected to reduce the number of engineers qualified and approved to perform windstorm inspections to about 15% of the current number.
- License holders should keep their PDH documentation for three years though it is unlikely the board will go back that far. The board shreds its records after three years.
- Engineers are required by the rules to report all code violations by other engineers that come to their attention.
- Unprofessional language is not well defined by the rules. To avoid receiving complaints for use of unprofessional language, make sure the language in your reports is objective and not an attack of another license holder.

Although time did not allow the presentation of specific ethics cases, these are included in Mr. Howell's slide presentation which may be viewed clicking [here](#).