

Structural Engineer Separate Licensure Summit
November 13, 2004
New Orleans, LA

Breakout Session Notes
State C (Limited Practice Act)

Questions Posed:

1. What should be under the umbrella of an S.E. practice act? Do all structures need to be designed by an S.E.?
2. Who are the parties we have to convince to move to the next step?
3. Who could be our opponents?
4. Should we change our plea from “life safety” to “public protection”, which is more encompassing?

Issues Raised:

1. Change is difficult – to migrate from a limited practice act to a full practice act.
2. To change the existing law, we must demonstrate a need.
3. One difficulty is that many civil engineers who are currently practicing structural engineering typically practice in only one specialty such as
 - Wood structures
 - Transmission towers
 - Bridges

To get an S.E. license, an engineer must prove to be qualified, through examination, in all areas of structural practice.

4. While it is recognized that using a natural disaster will always find a listening ear in the legislature, in some states where such disasters are not common, it is not feasible to “wait” for a natural disaster to happen.
5. At several universities today, one can earn a BSCE with only one course in structures! (GA Tech is one example)
6. Most current practice acts (OR, HI, IL) do not require an S.E. to design residential buildings. Yet, the California Northridge earthquake resulted in the highest number of losses in life from residential and wood structures? Are life safety concerns being fairly addressed in these instances? Are we missing the boat by excluding residential structures and other low-rise buildings?

Proposed Steps towards full Practice Act:

1. Use education (the mere 120 credit hour requirement) as one reason to advance from a limited practice act to a full practice act.
2. Examine lawsuits in your state to emphasize the need for specialized engineering that could have prevented a problem in a structure that is currently not required to be designed by an S.E.
3. Discuss with legislators certain types of structures/conditions that should only be designed by an S.E., such as blast, terrorism, etc.
4. Use the IL (and OR and HI if applicable) record of low disciplinary actions, relative to other states where enforcement is equal, to create a correlation between limited disciplinary action and a full S.E. practice act.
5. Use natural disasters and failures to emphasize public safety – focus on structures that failed and which were designed by PEs but not by qualified/licensed SEs.
6. Highlight incentives in having an S.E. perform structural engineering tasks:
 - a. SE is more efficient than someone less trained (lower overall cost to client even though hourly fee may be higher) – economic benefit to client.
 - b. Can professional liability premiums be lower for an SE than for a CE performing structural work? – economic benefit to SE and client.

- c. Reduced risk in structures designed by an SE – economic benefit to client, and improved life safety to public.
- 7. Bring support of national association (rather than silence), especially ASCE.
- 8. Make politicians believe that a full practice act is in the interest and for the protection of the public.
- 9. Use NCEES Model Law (nationally recognized) by local groups to incorporate in their proposed bill while lobbying for a full practice act.
- 10. Someone from the profession should become an elected/appointed official in the legislature.