

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

FBPE Rules Committee & Continuing Education

There are at least a half dozen permanent FBPE committees and another half dozen ad hoc committees. Presently, two ad hoc committees, the Traffic Engineering Committee and the Authorized Representative Committee, are very active. However, there are two standing committees which are continually hard at work. These are the Probable Cause Panel (PCP) Committee and the Rules Committee.

Warren G. Hahn, PE
FBPE Chair



The Probable Cause Panel deals, in general, with discipline of our engineering community. The Rules Committee, consisting of committee Chairman **John Burke, PE** members **William Bracken, PE, SI, CFM**, **Anthony Fiorillo, PE, SI, CGC, LEED AP**, and **Kenneth Todd, PE** continually review rules that are required with statute changes and when rules are required to be changed for the betterment for our engineering profession.

As most of you are aware, the Legislature, with the Governor's approval, has passed CS/HB713, which changed certain sections of **F.S. 471, Engineering**, as follows:

1. Revising qualifications for appointment of members of the FBPE.
2. Permitting a professional or technical engineering society to provide a list of qualified nominees.
3. Providing for staggered terms and lengths of terms for FBPE members.
4. Revising requirements for engineering license applicants who fail fundamentals of engineering (FE) examinations.
5. Authorizing an applicant who is delayed in taking the examination due to military service to have additional attempts to take the examination.
6. Revising requirements for obtaining licensure by endorsement.
7. Revising requirements for continuing education hours for engineer license renewal.

In particular, item number seven, *Continuing Education for Engineers*, will consume many hours of discussion with the Rules Committee.

Public comment and participation is encouraged with the Rules Committee as they implement the continuing education rules in response to the statute change. Rules Committee meetings are noticed and open to the public for participation. Also, when the full Board debates and votes upon Rules Committee recommendations, public comments are welcome. Public comment is also considered when the rule changes are published and before they take effect.

The revised statute for continuing education indicates that every licensee must complete nine (9) continuing education hours for each year of license renewal (18 continuing education hours for the two (2) year license renewal cycle.)

For each renewal cycle one hour must relate to rules, one hour must relate to ethics and four hours must relate to a licensee's area of practice. The remaining 12 hours may relate to any topic pertinent to the practice of engineering.

Of importance, continuing education hours may be earned by presenting or attending seminars, in-house or non-classroom courses, workshops, or professional or technical presentations made at meetings, webinars, conventions or conferences, including those presented by vendors with specific knowledge related to the licensee's area of practice.

How then will the rules be written to encompass the continuing education providers? It isn't anticipated that the Board will certify the continuing education providers as it now does. Yet, some sort of certification is required in that each engineer will be required to maintain a record of their continuing education, so that documentation can be verified, if needed. Remember that during each

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renewal cycle approximately 10% of the engineers renewing their license will be required, on a random selection basis, to provide

documentation to the Board that they have, in fact, completed the required continuing education.

As much as we may believe that an engineer's "word" is his bond, and that this is true for the majority of professional engineers, we all know there are those, in any profession, who just "flat-out" cheat. Hence, the need to monitor the authenticity of each individual's continuing education.

This means that each continuing education provider will be required to provide some sort of certification to each person completing their study course, seminar and/or continuing education presentation. This is a normal procedure when completing seminars and courses provided by professional societies and professional CEU (PDH) companies. However, it is not necessarily furnished by the "lunch-and-learn" providers, or necessarily by the engineering firms that provide in-house seminars or courses. Some sort of certification or documentation will be required to the engineer from a provider, verifying an engineer's completion of a continuing education course, session or seminar.

Should we accept a certificate from "Billy-Bob's Roto-Rooter Company" certifying that engineer "Donny Drainage, PE" completed a one hour course in "septic tank cleaning?" In all likelihood, the answer is **NO**. All professional engineers are aware of and probably value the engineering education information that can be, and is, provided by various product manufacturers. There is no question that the half hour to two hours of continuing education that they provide during a "lunch-and-learn" or similar session is 100% totally acceptable.

However, will the 10% random verification of documentation or certification ferret out the "certificates" from "Billy Bob's Roto-Rooter Company" for "septic tank cleaning," or similar dubious certification?

How can the FBPE staff ascertain the acceptability of a given continuing education certificate while wading through an average of five (5) certificates for each of 3,000 engineers (15,000 certificates) every two years? Verifying these over a two year period, on a systematic basis would be 625 certificates per month, or 30 certificates per day which would be six (6) engineer's continuing education verified daily over that two year period. **Is this doable?** This is what the Rules Committee will wrestle with during their next several committee sessions.

Also, as a reminder, the statutory changes numbered one through six above went into effect on July 1, 2014. However, item number seven dealing with continuing education will not go into



effect until **March 1, 2015** in order to allow engineers to renew their licenses smoothly during the upcoming renewal period, which opens on **November 3, 2014** and ends on **February 28, 2015**.

For those interested in participating in the Rules Committee meetings that are available to the public or providing comments/feedback prior to the meetings can send an email to board@fbpe.org.

You can view the most current laws and rules as it relates to the practice of engineering by going to the *Legal* section of our website and selecting "*Statutes and Rules*" or by following this link, www.fbpe.org/legal/statutes-and-rules.

FBPE Vice-Chair, **William C. Bracken, PE, SI, CFM** has submitted a related article titled, "*FBPE's Board Committees*" on page 11 of this issue of the newsletter. In his article you can read more information about the other groups mentioned in this article of the *Chairman's Corner*, their responsibilities and how to find out about meetings and participation.

Warren G. Hahn, PE is a licensed engineer with Hahn Engineering, Inc. located in Tampa, Florida. He has over 50 years experience in engineering contracting and construction. Mr. Hahn's experience includes extensive involvement in heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. He provides engineering, design, analysis, construction supervision and inspection of mechanical, plumbing, fire sprinkler, security, network, lighting and electrical systems. Mr. Hahn also serves as an expert witness with forensic experience related to mechanical and electrical engineering.

Mr. Hahn is currently serving his second term as Chair of the Florida Board of Professional Engineers.
