Updates From the Mississippi Licensing Board

The Mississippi Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors has been monitoring the Covid-19 situation. According to updates on its website, the board has been limiting office operations to essential staff only and will not receive visitors other than for mail delivery.

The board is continuing to process applications as information is received. Examinees and licensed professionals can visit www.pepls.state.ms.us for information and updates as well as follow @PeplsM on Twitter.

Nearly Half of States Are Likely to Experience Flooding This Spring

The warmth and blooming foliage that mark the arrival of spring are perhaps more welcome to Americans now than at any time in recent memory. But spring also brings its own challenges, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) warns that the season carries a risk of moderate to major flooding across 23 states this year. This outlook should not come as a surprise: Over the past decade, more flood-related disasters have occurred during spring than in any other season. Those disasters struck more than 75 percent of states, and nine of the 10 states that were affected the most are inland.

Read the full article here.

From 2019: Holding Back the Waters

Midwest flooding in 2019 caused an estimated $12 billion in damages to homes, business, farms, and infrastructure. The US Army Corps of Engineers counted at least 50 levees that were breached or overtopped. And a New York Times headline gave voice to residents’ concerns: “Will Our Levees Be the Next to Fail?”
In the Mississippi Levee District, home of the 176-mile Mainline Mississippi River Levee, an NSPE member is taking an approach of continuous improvement for the safety of residents in his area. Recalling memories of the area's 1927 “Great Flood” and the 2011 “Epic Flood,” Peter Nimrod, P.E., chief engineer of the Mississippi Levee Board, said, “We want people to feel very safe and comfortable living behind the levee, with their homes, businesses, children, schools, and farmland.” He continued, “We don’t just sit around thinking our levee is great—we want the levee to get better and better.”

The Mainline Mississippi River Levee is built to the “project design flood,” the worst-case scenario, with a 360-foot-wide base and rising 30 feet tall on average. And while 1927 was the last levee failure on the system, Nimrod pointed to the need for constant attention to ensure that never happens again anywhere on the lower Mississippi River Valley.

The Levee District, governed by the levee board, maintains and operates 212 miles of levees along the river; maintains 360 miles of interior streams; and collaborates with the Corps of Engineers on levee and interior drainage projects.

The board’s responsibilities include leading flood fights. And major floods have been increasing, said Nimrod—from an historic average of once every 20 years to an average of once every two years since 2008. “So, it’s really different out there.”

He attributed this to increased rainfall, additional development through the Mississippi River Valley, and farmers doing a better job improving their land to shed water.

Read the full article in PE magazine.

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**Conference Call and Video Conferencing Etiquette**

According to Zoom, 200 million people are now using its platform every day. This is an increase of more than 10 million people since before the pandemic. Before “zooming,” consider—is it necessary, or can a good old-fashioned phone call/conference do? First and foremost, be sure to try to schedule video conferences in advance, as video chats are as intrusive, or more so, then “just stopping by” an office in the old normal.

**Make sure you are in a quiet location where you will not be disturbed.**

**Mute yourself when not speaking.**

**Use appropriate equipment. And ensure it works correctly.**

- If possible, always use a phone with a handset that is hard-wired into the...
phone lines. Be sure to TEST the working condition of your equipment before an important meeting!

- Cellular or cordless phones are more likely to cause static or other distracting noise that they pick up on the airwaves
- Speakerphones pick up lots of background noise, and sometimes cause "clipping" because of the limitations of the equipment. If you are using a speakerphone, try to find one that is "full digital duplex"—this will allow all parties to speak at the same time with no clipping. And if no one in your room needs to speak, use the "Mute" button on the phone to prevent background noise from disrupting the meeting. When someone needs to speak, simply release the "Mute."

**Turn off your call waiting.** Some of our conferences are set to play a tone as an announcement of a new person entering the conference. If your line starts beeping with call waiting, it can be very confusing and disrupting to the meeting! Check with your local phone service provider if you are unsure how to deactivate this function on your phone.

**Be on time or early!** It is especially helpful for the host or chairperson of the call to arrive a few minutes early to greet each of the participants and let them know whether everyone is ready to start yet. Your presence in these opening minutes will also help you head off any premature discussions the participants might begin before you're ready!

**Introduce yourself when you begin speaking.** Others may not know your voice!

**Don't put your phone on HOLD to do something else.** Your hold music will play into the conference call and make it impossible for the other participants to continue the meeting in your absence. (Remember to un-mute yourself when you come back!)

**Try to stay on schedule.** Stick to the minutes per topic laid out in your agenda and be respectful of others' time!

**Video Conference?** Frame the camera correctly. Have the right light. Look into the camera. Pay attention.

Download these etiquette tips in PDF.

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**Working Remotely? Update Your Mailing Address and Phone Number**

If you’re working from home or elsewhere out of the office, log into your NSPE account to ensure we have the most up-to-date information to continue to serve
you. Please make sure to update both your phone number and mailing address.

If you haven’t yet managed your e-subscription options, please make sure to do so as well.

**During Outbreak, NSPE’s in Your Corner**

The world finds itself today in a crisis unlike any in recent memory. While members of the engineering profession are facing the same uncertainties as everyone else, NSPE’s volunteer leaders and staff are firmly committed to doing the very best we can to help you through this very difficult time.

As you strive to stay on top of your professional and personal life, remember that NSPE is a resource for you.

First, watch this video message from NSPE Executive Director Mark Golden, “Dark Days Shine New Light on Profession, Community.” It is an early look at his column for the May/June *PE* magazine. ([Read it on the NSPE Blog and leave a comment!](#)

And access NSPE’s dedicated pages of resources, including public documents from NSPE’s Government Relations team that aggregate state-level legislation on support for small businesses, and changes to licensure renewals and requirements. The documents update in real time.

Also:

- Read NSPE’s and NICET’s statements on COVID-19.
Stay in touch with fellow members of the profession and share your experiences through the Open Forum in NSPE’s Communities. Recent topics include remote work, Coronavirus and engineering companies - best practices, and Coronavirus and engineers.

Plan to remotely attend our upcoming webinars on topics like engineering ethics, strategies for navigating unconscious bias, the 2020 EJCDC engineering contract agreements, and others.

Tap into the 15 free webinars that are included in your membership.

Connect with NSPE and your colleagues on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Don’t forget to check out what your state society is doing for you. Visit your state society’s website so you can learn more about the local resources available to you.

Look for coverage of how the pandemic is affecting NSPE members and affiliated organizations in the May/June issue of PE magazine.

NSPE members are truly unique. They share a deep commitment to the ethical practice of engineering in service to the public, they strive to make the most of their professional lives, and they aim to build a better profession. Your Society is here to help you meet those commitments.

If you would like to reach us directly, please visit our “Contact Us” page.

### Webinar Covers Pandemic and the Profession

With the coronavirus spreading across the country, PEs are finding their professional lives filled with ambiguity, uncertainty, and improvisation. In a webinar on April 2, NSPE provided an overview of the quickly changing situation, including federal and state responses affecting professional engineers and their businesses.

“It’s a very difficult situation we’re all facing, and we’re seeing a cascading impact in so many different areas,” said Arthur Schwartz, NSPE’s deputy chief executive officer and general counsel. Schwartz presented the webinar with Stephanie Hamilton, NSPE’s government relations and advocacy manager.

Schwartz noted that state licensing boards are struggling. As state agencies, some are closing, and others are reducing staff. PEs are likely to find spotty phone and email service, Schwartz said. In addition, the timeliness of application approval for licensure by comity and reciprocity has “really been strangled in many ways.”
The pandemic has also forced cancellation of all paper-and-pencil licensing exams scheduled for April 2020. Computer-based licensing exams, such as the FE exam and the PE exams in chemical and environmental engineering, have also been halted. So, too, have NICET technician certification exams.

The most significant action on the federal front is the CARES Act. The law expands Small Business Administration loans; creates grants that can be put toward education, training, and advising of small businesses and their employees; and sets refundable payroll tax credits of up to $5,000 for each employee.

States are also responding with legislation and executive orders. As of April 2, the District of Columbia and nine states had taken action specifically related to licensure: Alaska, Arizona, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, South Dakota, and Texas. A current and detailed list of legislative action (not executive orders) is publicly available. Some states have also enacted legislation or executive orders aimed at helping small businesses.


Tell other NSPE members how you’re adapting to the coronavirus pandemic or share your thoughts on other professional issues in NSPE’s Open Forum.

Learn and Engage With NSPE’s Upcoming Webinars

Professional development is crucial to maintaining a license, moving up the career ranks, and maintaining a sense of engagement during these challenging times. NSPE provides access to a variety of topics, including the Ethics Forum, from the comfort of your home or office. All webinars are held 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. Eastern.

**April 15**
Engineering Ethics – Conflicts of Interest, Licensure, Confidentiality, and Public Criticism

**April 29**
Navigating Unconscious Bias: Strategies for Success

May 6
2020 EJCDC Engineering Agreements

May 13
Engineering Ethics – Objectivity and Truthfulness, Public Health and Safety, Signing and Sealing of Engineering Drawings, and Misrepresentation

See the full list.

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