



## When Will You Become a Licensed SE?

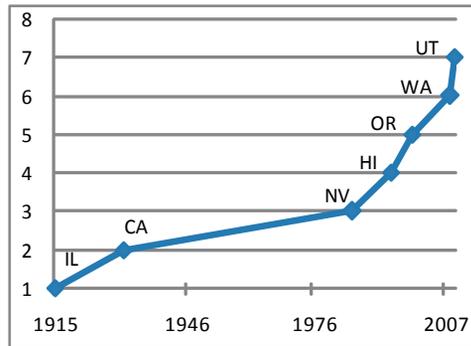
By Sam A. Rihani, P.E., F. ASCE

Earlier this year, the Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) issued its first Policy Statement in support of Structural Engineer (SE) licensure. The policy states that the Institute “encourages Professional Engineers practicing structural engineering to further obtain a Structural Engineer license in jurisdictions that have any form of Structural Engineering license by complying with the jurisdiction’s specified requirements for education, experience and examination, and by meeting continuing education requisites to maintain this license. SEI also encourages jurisdictions to license

Structural Engineers as a post-PE (Professional Engineer) credential, and to include in their new legislation an equitable transitioning clause for engineers currently practicing structural engineering.” The full text may be found at <http://content.seinstitute.org/inside/SELicensure.html>.

Before issuing the policy, SEI sought input from various engineering organizations and received endorsement from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the National Council of Structural Engineers Association (NCSEA), and the Council of American Structural Engineers (CASE). SEI previously received support from various ASCE Institutes. The National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) was the only organization that expressed their opposition to the policy.

The first SE license was established in 1915 in Illinois. Today eleven states, representing approximately 32% of licensed engineers, have incorporated the SE license into their legislation. Seven of these states (Illinois, Hawaii, California, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington) have a full or partial practice act while the remaining four (Arizona, Idaho, Nebraska, and New Mexico) have a title act. There has been unprecedented activity in recent years, as three out of the seven states with a practice act have enacted such legislation just in the last decade. The primary reason for this is the recognition that new technology and building codes have resulted in more complex analyses and designs of structures, thus requiring increased knowledge and skills. With this trend, and to better serve and protect the public, those engineers who exhibit additional or advanced expertise and credentials within the structural practice area of civil engineering should be identified through post-PE credentialing programs and become responsible for designing significant structures. In 2004, in recognition of special licensing requirements for structural engineers, the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) established a new *Model Law Structural Engineer*. In April 2011, a 16-hour structural



examination will be offered for the first time by NCEES which will replace the current SE-I and SE-II exams.

Today, there is interest among several states in SE licensing and it is believed that another seven to ten will join the ranks during the coming decade. States that are actively pursuing an SE license act today are Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Texas, and Minnesota. Idaho is considering the transition from a title act to

a practice act, while California wants to pursue expanding their current partial practice act to include additional significant structures.

The Professional Activities Committee (PAC) of SEI has made its priority during the past 10 years to support any state that shows interest in the enactment of a structural engineering practice act. Such support has come through four summits (2002 – 2008) during which structural engineers from around the nation gathered to address the need and mechanism of enacting SE practice acts. The committee has presented several papers at Structures Congresses and prepared case studies which highlight structural failures that may have been prevented had the design engineer been licensed as an SE. These case studies and other resources are available at <http://content.seinstitute.org/inside/SELicensure.html>. Members of PAC continue to meet with representatives of states where the pursuit of an SE practice act is desired, to share lessons learned from previous experiences and to provide the necessary information and materials that would assist in such an endeavor.

It is anticipated that it will take several years before the majority of states would adopt a structural engineering practice act; however, the current momentum is likely to increase the number of states requiring licensure of structural engineers in the coming few years. If you practice in one of the states that is currently pursuing a practice act, you may be among those becoming licensed as an SE in the near future. If you practice in the other states, it is a matter of when, not if, you will be licensed as an SE. ■

*Sam Rihani is the Chair of SEI-PAC and a member of the Board of Governors of SEI. He is also the past Chairman of the Structural Engineers Association of Metropolitan Washington. He can be reached at [SRihani@Engineering.com](mailto:SRihani@Engineering.com).*

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