



# Valley Engineer Newsletter

October, 2013

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- November 12, Blommer Chocolate Tour, East Greenville, PA
- December – Holiday dinner
- January – Just Born?
- February – Engineer’s Week
- March – Dorney Park
- April – Lehigh Valley Health Network, joint event with GBC
- May – Banquet
- June – Iron Pigs tour followed by game



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**LEHIGH VALLEY CHAPTER  
(ORGANIZED 1935)**

## Lehigh Valley Chapter, Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers

Kevin Campbell, PE

Dear Members:

For this month’s President’s Message, I’m going to share my favorite joke to make a serious point:

An engineer dies and meets with St. Peter at the pearly gates. St. Peter is scanning through the list of names he has for the people that are accepted into heaven, but he does not find the engineer’s name and regrettably sends the engineer to hell.

A few months go by, and God shows up at the pearly gates, asking St. Peter what happened to the engineer that he was expecting in heaven. St. Peter explains that his name was not on the list and therefore he sent the poor engineer to hell. God, a bit agitated, tells St. Peter that after doing this job for all these years, he should know by now that all engineers go to heaven.

So God goes to see the Devil to get the engineer back. However, the Devil refuses, saying that this is the first engineer that they have ever had in hell. Telling God the first thing he did was put in air conditioning, then built an addition, got everyone on the internet, is working on water and sewer and building a road network, etc... now that we have an engineer life is really not hell anymore and actually pretty nice.

Continued on Page 2

You can stop the joke here. However, if you know some lawyers with a sense of humor continue.

God, getting flustered with the Devil, says look, you send that engineer to heaven right now or I'm taking you to court. The devil responds, now God, where are you going to find a lawyer!

As engineers, we get stereotyped and people often poke fun at us. So okay, we can be a little on the geeky side, maybe we are not the most social, many of us have difficulty spelling, and we sometimes wear short sleeve dress shirts with our pocket protectors and carry our calculators around. However, I also feel that the majority of engineering accomplishments throughout history are for the most part taken for granted. Most of what makes modern life so wonderful is the result of engineering. So let's take a minute to feel proud of what each of us has contributed individually, and what all of us have done collectively to make a little bit of heaven on earth!

-----  
Everything is funny, if you can laugh at it.  
- Lewis Carroll  
-----

You can always amend a big plan, but you can never expand a little one. I don't believe in little plans. I believe in plans big enough to meet a situation which we can't possibly foresee now.  
-Harry S. Truman  
-----

Never be afraid to try something new. Remember, amateurs built the ark. Professionals built the Titanic.  
-Anonymous  
-----

When a person has an accent, it means they can speak one more language than you.  
-Fernando Lamas

**Engineering and Ethics**  
Alfred Gruenke PE

Engineers have traditionally been trained in the physical sciences. This is because engineers work in the physical world. This demands an understanding of the natural laws, from the bending of beams to the movement of electrons.

However, as Professional Engineers we are also exposed to the corporate and legal aspect to our profession. We deal with clients, owners, lawyers, accountants, contractors, and others who may or may not have an understanding of engineering principles. It is the function of professional liability insurance brokers to bridge this gap.

On October 3, around twenty LVPSPE members heard a two-hour presentation by Bruce R. Demeter, Vice President of OneBeacon Professional Insurance. The presentation was divided into two parts; Part 1 was entitled "Maintaining the Professional Standard of Care"; Part 2 was entitled "Professional Ethics: How They Effect Your Professional Liability" Bruce is a lawyer who specializes in liability insurance for all the principle parties in a project; the engineer and the contractor.

The main theme of both presentations was ethics: doing the right thing with respect to the client.

Bruce tackled concepts such as negligence, and presented various examples. He defined negligence as "The omission to do something which a prudent and reasonable person, guided by those considerations which ordinarily regulate the conduct of human affairs, would do; or doing something which a prudent and reasonable person would not do". In essence, applying community standards to our professional relationships.

Continued on Page 3

The last theme, applying community standards, was a thread throughout the presentations. One may be tempted to crow about one's achievements, but don't put such language in the contract. It is important that the contract incorporates language that promises measurable results, avoiding phrases such as "the best", "free of any errors", "superior to", and the like. Don't raise the standards. Instead, ask for "ordinary standards". Keep your chest-thumping and hyperbole in your websites and other advertising!

Bruce emphasized the necessity of establishing a Code of Conduct, which are Federal rules guiding the relationship between the firm and the client. Companies have to submit proof that they have been enacted, and enforced. This is also good business practice. Companies that practice their code of ethics from the top down regularly outperform the Dow Jones averages. Enron and Tyco had a Code of Conduct, but were not enforced.

Bruce suggests incorporating, and exploring with legal counsel if an LLC is available as an incorporation option in order to protect the engineer from lawsuits.

There was an emphasis on writing the contract so that every party to the contract assumes that risk that they can control. During the execution of the contract, it is important to pay close attention to the project. If problems arise, call your broker immediately. Do not allow your inherent desire be a "good guy", to view any errors on your part as strictly technical and proceed to fix it without regard to other parties. A trained and experienced insurance broker may be able to mitigate the issue and spread any costs.

There was a lively discussion on the roles of the engineer, the firm, and the insurance broker.

We live in a complex world. Bruce presented a different perspective of engineering, away from the technical environment to which we are normally exposed. It was well appreciated, and we thank him.

### **Final Thoughts**

Alfred Gruenke PE

As stated previously in this Newsletter, Engineers live by natural laws. However, please note that there are UNNATURAL LAWS! READ, and BEWARE!

MURPHY'S LAW: If anything can go wrong, it will.

O'TOOLE'S COMMENTARY ON MURPHY'S LAW: Murphy was an optimist.

THE UNSPEAKABLE LAW: As soon as you mention something, if it's good, it goes away; if it's bad, it happens.

UNRECIPROCAL LAWS OF EXPECTATIONS; Negative expectations yield negative results. Positive expectations yield positive results.

HOWE'S LAW: Every man has a scheme that will not work.

ZYMURGY'S FIRST LAW OF EVOLVING SYSTEM DYNAMICS: Once you open a can of worms, the only way to re-can them is to use a larger can.

ETORRE'S OBSERVATION: The other line moves faster.

SKINNER'S CONSTANT (FLANNAGAN'S FINAGLING FACTOR): That quantity which, when multiplied by, divided by, added to or subtracted from the answer you get, gives you the answer you should have gotten.

LAW OF SELECTIVE GRAVITY: An object will fall so as to do the most damage.

Continued on Page 4

JENNINGS COROLLARY: The chance of the bread falling with the buttered side down is directly proportional to the cost of the carpet.

GORDON'S FIRST LAW: If a research project is not worth doing at all, it is not worth doing well.

MAIER'S LAW: If the facts do not conform to the theory, they must be disposed of.

HOARE'S LAW OF LARGE PROBLEMS: Inside every large problem is a small problem struggling to get out.

THE GOLDEN RULE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES: Whoever has the gold makes the rules.

BARTH'S DISTINCTION: There are two types of people; those who divide people into two types, and those who don't.

SEGAL'S LAW: A man with one watch knows what time it is. A man with two watches is never sure.

AUGUST POLINSKE'S NINETY-RULE OF PROJECT SCHEDULES: The first 90 percent of the job takes 90 percent of the time. The last 10 percent takes the other 90 percent.

BOREN'S FIRST LAW: When in doubt, mumble.

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**You think English is easy??  
I think a retired English major was  
bored...THIS IS GREAT!  
It took a lot of work to put this  
together!**

- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- The farm was used to produce produce.
- The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- We must polish the Polish furniture.
- He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- I did not object to the object.
- The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- They were too close to the door to close it.
- The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
- To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
- The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
- I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

So there, you have it...confusing, illogical, yet beautiful.

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Lehigh Valley Chapter  
**Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers**  
**Lehigh, Northampton, Monroe and Carbon Counties**



**MINUTES FOR THE OCTOBER 14, 2013 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**At the office of Barry Isett & Associates, 85 S. Route 100, Allentown, PA**

Attendees: Kevin Campbell, Al Gruenke, Peter Staffeld, Al Dezubay, Nicole Gasda and Chris Williams.

**I. Call to Order: Kevin Campbell called the meeting to order at 5:59 PM**

**II. President – Kevin Campbell**

**Programs**

- Liability seminar on 10/3/2013 went well. Received many positive comments.
- October – Victaulic tour on 10/23/2013. Have 20 people signed up already. Event is also open to ASHRAE, SWE and CSI.
- November – Majestic Athletics. Date TBD. May look into a backup plan if this falls through.
- December – Holiday dinner. Kevin investigated America On Wheels museum. Would cost \$500 to use the facility plus food and beverages. All agreed that holding the event at Allentown Brew Works with a guest speaker would be a better option. Also considered Allentown Art Museum.
- January – Just Born or Blommer Chocolate. Kevin will contact both.
- February – Engineer's Week
- March – Possible tour of Dorney Park. Would be focused on roller coaster maintenance.
- April – Lehigh Valley Health Network, joint event w/GBC

**MathCounts** – Date set for 2/8/2013 or 2/9/2013, to be held at Trexler MS again.

**III. Valley Engineer** - Al will begin soliciting for advertisements shortly. Will keep MathCounts fundraising separate.

**IV. Treasurer – Ray Szczucki (via email)**

- IRS Form 990 efiled in September.
- PSPE Dues Disbursement Request Form submitted.
- Will compile financial summary for audit.

**V. State Director – Angelika Forndran (as reported by Peter)**

- At last meeting, approved \$10 increase in state membership fee.
- Officers were installed – Eric Tappert for President Elect, Joe McCarthy for NE Regional VP, Peter for Treasurer.

**VI Past President – Peter Staffeld**

- Nominating Committee – Anticipating each position being filled by current member.

**VII Adjournment** at 6:34 PM on a motion by Nicole, seconded by Peter. All in favor.