

New Continuing Education Requirements Legislation Enacted

HB 975 signed by Governor Rendell into Act 25 of 2010

Answers to questions surrounding exactly how mandatory continuing education will work for Pennsylvania licensed professional engineers, geologist and land surveyors got a whole lot clearer this week as new legislation (House Bill 975) was enacted to clarify most of the particulars.

The Senate passed House Bill 975 unanimously on May 4th. The bill was not amended in the Senate, so it went directly to Governor Rendell for his signature. Governor Rendell signed the bill into law on May 12, 2010. The law will take effect in 60 days.

PSPE spearheaded the effort to pass a bill which gives professional engineers more flexibility in meeting the CE requirements than was available under the previous law. The new law is modeled after the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) model rules for continuing education. As a result, the language in the law is quite specific as it is based more on model regulations rather than model legislation.

Following is a recap of the most important details of the law:

- Licensees shall comply with the CE requirements during the 2009-2011 biennial renewal cycle.
- That means licensees will be asked to meet the requirements during the current cycle and may have their license renewal denied in September of 2011 if they have not met the requirements.
- Each licensee needs to obtain 24 PDH units during the current and future biennial (every 2 years) licensing periods.
- A PDH (Professional Development Hour) is defined as 50 minutes of instruction or presentation relevant to professional practice.
- The CE requirements can be met by attending educational courses, participating in distance educational courses, teaching, authoring published works or obtaining patents.
- There is no requirement that courses be preapproved by the State Registration Board, but the Board will have final authority to determine if a particular course is relevant or not.
- The rule of thumb is that courses must “maintain, improve or develop the professional’s skills or knowledge”.
- Courses in ethics and the law are acceptable subject matter for CE credit.
- Courses in practice building or office management are not acceptable subjects for CE credit.
- Up to 12 PDH units may be carried forward from one licensure cycle to the next.
- The Board may grant exemptions from meeting the CE requirements for reasons such as active military duty, physical disability, illness or other extenuating circumstances.
- Newly licensed individuals are exempt from the CE requirement for the licensure period immediately following initial licensure and registration.

While the Pennsylvania State Registration Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors and Geologists has ultimate authority over what is considered acceptable education or activities, the new law places most of the responsibility upon the licensee.

Within the parameters established in the statute, you will determine what courses or activities relate to your professional practice.

To access excerpts from the law pertaining to continuing education, click here:

http://www.pspe.org/pdfs/Edited_CE_HB-975.pdf

PSPE will continue to provide our members with updates on any new developments relative to the CE requirements, but feel free to contact us if you have questions. Remember, all PSPE members are currently eligible for 4 free PDHs from the National Society of Professional Engineers; click here to review available courses: <http://www.nspe.org/resources/newpages/fourfreePDHs.html>