

Occupations-Licensing J.M. WALKER ✓

Q & A

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ABOUT
REGISTRATION
FOR
ENGINEERS
IN
INDUSTRY



NATIONAL SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS
2029 K STREET NORTHWEST ■ WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

1962

Introduction

Professional engineering registration laws, sponsored and advocated by the engineering profession, serve to protect the public health, safety and welfare. They insure that the recipients of professional engineer licenses have at least met the proscribed requirements of competence, ability, experience and character. A meaningful distinction has been established in this way between those qualified and those who improperly call themselves engineers. Consequently, with this legal sanction afforded by the passage of professional engineering registration laws, engineering licensure has become the common denominator of those who aspire to recognized professional stature. It is the only way to assure universal recognition as a professional member of the team which has aided this nation's progress in over-all public welfare and national defense.

Professional engineering registration laws have been enacted in all fifty states, U. S. Territories and the District of Columbia. The increased importance and significance which has been attached to registration by industry and management is reflected in the phenomenal growth in the number of registrants. The first registration law was enacted in 1907, and a quarter of a century later, there were only about 10,000 registered professional engineers—an average of 400 per year. Between 1940 and 1960, the number of registrants increased at an annual average of 7,000. Current figures indicate that the number is increasing at the rate of approximately 10,000 annually, with the total number of registrants approaching 300,000. In view of industry's—as well as government's—ever-increasing emphasis on registration as a prerequisite for employment or advancement in engineering positions, there is every reason to believe that the number of registrants will accelerate at an even more rapid pace in the coming years.

Because of some lack of understanding of the needs, advantages or the requirements of registration, the Professional Engineers in Industry, a national functional section of the National Society of Professional Engineers, has prepared this pamphlet as another of its major activities in the field of engineer-management relations. We have tried to anticipate your questions covering engineering registration and have attempted to provide answers in a concise and straightforward manner.

1. Q. IN GENERAL, WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION AS A PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER?

A. Since the states operate as independent governmental units, the requirements for registration in each state are exclusively within the control of the state legislature. Consequently, the language and specific provisions of state engineering registration laws may vary in detail from state to state. However, It can be stated generally that most state laws require graduation from an accredited engineering curriculum, followed by approximately four years of responsible engineering experience, plus the successful completion of an oral and/or written examination. Most state laws permit the substitution of practical experience for formal education.

2. Q. WHO WOULD PASS UPON MY APPLICATION TO DETERMINE IF I MEET THE NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS?

A. The evaluation of each individual's application for registration is vested in the judgment and discretion of the state engineering registration board. The state statute sets forth the basic requirements for registration and delegates to the board the authority and responsibility to interpret and apply these criteria to each applicant, and to determine if the applicant meets the established requirements in that state. The board also determines, from the application and interview, whether or not the applicant must take an examination. Engineering registration boards are composed of registered professional engineers with proven ability and experience. Such a composition of board members assures the applicant that members of the profession itself evaluate his qualifications, rather than some individual unfamiliar with engineering activities.

3. Q. WHY IS AN EXAMINATION REQUIRED IF I ALREADY HAVE A DEGREE?

A. Again, it is always up to the state board to decide if an examination is required. A degree in and of itself may not be sufficient because there are fundamental differences between a showing of formal education successfully completed and authorization by the people of the state to practice a profession involving their health, safety and welfare. This distinction has been recognized and accepted by the other professions, such as law and medicine, which also require examinations for a state license to practice. A registration examination tests more than technical knowledge, although that is a large part of it. It also involves an understanding of ethics, professional concepts and appli-

cation of principles to practice. Finally, an examination prescribes the same standard for all, regardless of educational background and extent of schooling. It is a mechanism whereby the individual is granted a right by the people of the state through the legally-constituted voice of the people under law.

4. Q. IS REGISTRATION GOOD ONLY IN THE STATE GRANTING THE CERTIFICATE, OR IS IT RECOGNIZED ELSEWHERE?

A. Engineering registration, like registration for other professions, does not permit a registered professional engineer to practice engineering in all states without further certification. Practically all states, however, provide for registration on a reciprocal basis to engineers already registered in another state, provided the requirements in the state which has granted the certificate at least equal the minimum requirements in the additional state in which the applicant seeks to be licensed. Most state registration laws contain language which permits an out-of-state registered professional engineer to practice in that state for periods not exceeding thirty days per year without the need for applying for a certificate. Uniformity among state registration laws to facilitate reciprocity is a goal toward which most engineering societies have been diligently working for many years. To that end a "model law" has been developed and has been used as a guide for almost forty years, with the approval of thirteen national engineering societies.

5. Q. WILL REGISTRATION PUT MORE MONEY IN MY POCKET?

A. Whether or not you will receive more money merely because you are a registered professional engineer, will, of course, depend upon the personnel policies of your particular employer. However, registration in many firms is considered a major factor in evaluating employees for promotion, more responsible work and more opportunities for individual thought and discretion. A natural corollary to this is additional compensation. For instance, many leading firms employing relatively large numbers of engineering personnel, such as the Texas Division of the Dow Chemical Company, have adopted policies providing that any engineer who wishes to advance to a senior engineering position must meet the qualifications of registration before he will be considered for advancement.

A survey conducted by the Schenectady General Electric Engineers' Association of over 2,000 mem-

bers of that group indicates that registered professional engineers enjoy an advantage both salary-wise and position-wise over their nonregistered associates. The statistics show that the man with the license receives \$2,000 to \$2,500 a year more salary in the age level above 40 years. Below 40, the advantage is \$500 to \$1,000 a year.

6. Q. WHAT BENEFITS WILL I DERIVE FROM REGISTRATION AS FAR AS MY JOB IS CONCERNED?

A. With the increased emphasis that many leading, professionally-minded industrial firms are placing upon engineering registration for their employees, the benefits which the individual engineer receives from registration are abundant.

Some indication has already been given that registration may now be or become a prerequisite to promotion. No one knows what the future may hold for him, but there is every indication from the present trend that registration is more likely to be required for positions of professional responsibility in industry. It is certain that it will never be easier for the qualified engineer to become registered than at the present, from the standpoint of more stringent requirements and the time lapse between education and a demonstration of required knowledge.

If an engineer has that personal ingredient which motivates him voluntarily to seek registration, it is perfectly logical that management will, if possible, provide him with an opportunity to demonstrate those same qualities of drive and determination in the performance of responsible tasks.

Many firms have established programs requiring that each registered professional engineer engaged in design must place his seal on his drawings. This not only identifies the individual with his work and gives him the responsibility for it, but it indicates that management is willing to recognize his effort and give him credit.

In addition to the intangible benefits and satisfaction of being officially identified with the engineering profession, the registered engineer will find his services are indispensable to many industrial companies in certain instances. Examples are project contracts calling for design, supervision and approval by a registered engineer, or field work of a type which, under local statutes, must be under the control of a registered engineer. The presence of a registered engineer in situations such as these obviously works to the best interests of both the customer and the company.

7. Q. ASIDE FROM AIDING ME IN MY JOB, WHAT OTHER ADVANTAGES CAN I EXPECT FROM REGISTRATION?

A. Registration or licensure is a legal acknowledgment by a competent body that the person to whom a certificate is issued possesses a specified degree of competence and has demonstrated his qualifications. Registered engineers thus have the legal status to practice their profession. In exchange for the registered engineer's obligations to the public and to his profession, he is granted certain rights through legal rulings by virtue of his being registered. For instance, it has generally been held by the courts that a person cannot collect on a contract for the rendition of engineering services unless he is a registered engineer. Contracts for engineering services entered into by an engineer who is not registered are considered by the courts to be invalid, and thus unenforceable.

It has also been held that a person is unqualified to testify in judicial proceedings as an expert witness on engineering matters unless he is a registered professional engineer.

Many state and municipal governments have passed statutes, ordinances and rulings which require that certain governmental engineering positions be filled by registered professional engineers.

8. Q. WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF INDUSTRY TOWARD ENGINEERING REGISTRATION?

A. There is probably no industrial employer of engineers today who would not like to have all his qualified engineering employees become registered. Engineering registration constitutes an integral part of the programs of professional development of many firms; so much so, in fact, that many progressive companies have specific policies calling for the encouragement of registration and actual assistance to those engineers taking their first steps toward registration. A recent NSPE survey showed over 75 per cent of industrial employers actively encourage their engineers to become registered. In addition, many companies obviously favor registration as it enhances the firm's reputation to have large numbers of registered professional engineers on its staff.

Examples of actual assistance toward registration currently being offered by several industrial employers are the following: making available to employees information on registration requirements and procedures in the several states, assistance in the preparation and filing of application forms, payment by the company of the required fees and the sponsorship of review courses in preparation for registration examinations.

Of course, not all firms engage in the activities enumerated above. Many forward-thinking firms, however, have expressed definite company policies favoring engineering registration.

9. Q. ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE REGISTRATION?

A. Yes. The following examples of policy announcements will serve to illustrate a professional attitude on the part of employers and their efforts to instill a similar attitude in their engineering employees:

- The Mueller Brass Company, Port Huron, Michigan, has promulgated a policy urging its engineering employees to secure registration under the state engineering registration law. With a specific company objective of registration for all its engineers, new engineers being considered for employment will be required to make a firm expression of Intent to take the registration examination after they have become qualified in practical experience. In considering candidates for promotion to supervisory engineering positions, the company says it will give strong preference to those who are registered under the state law.

- The Boeing Airplane Company's Field Test Section at the Florida Missile Test Center has adopted a philosophy which encourages an engineer to become registered and a program of assistance to help him. Information on the desirability of registration and licensing procedure is periodically routed to all engineering personnel. Engineers who need time to travel elsewhere to take the examinations receive full pay for this time. Pertinent study material for use in preparing for the examination is maintained in the company library.

- The Phillips Petroleum Company has adopted a company-wide policy encouraging engineering registration. On the request of the employee, the company will pay the initial professional registration fee in one state, as well as the annual renewal fee. The company will also pay the same costs for registration in additional states if the additional registration is required by the company.

- Frank T. Lewis, Manager, Manufacturing Personnel Development, General Electric Company, is quoted in a recent company advertisement directed to young engineers, in response to the questions, "Do you advise getting a professional engineer's license? What's it worth to me?" as follows: "There are only a few cases where a license is required at G. E., but we certainly encourage all engineers to strive for one. At present, nearly a quarter of our engineers are licensed, and the per-

centage is constantly increasing. What's it worth? A license gives you professional status and the recognition and prestige that go with it. You may find, in years to come, that a license will be required in more and more instances. Now, while your studies are fresh in your mind, is the best time to undertake the requirements."

- A manual of standard practices of the Engineering Department of the duPont Company explains the statutory regulations of professional engineering, the fact that the duPont Company and the engineering department can only be accredited through professional engineers, and sets forth the desirability of individual registration.

- As mentioned previously, the Texas Division of the Dow Chemical Company has adopted a policy calling for registration as a prerequisite for promotion to certain engineering positions.

10. Q. CAN I DO ANYTHING ABOUT REGISTRATION BEFORE I GET MY FULL EXPERIENCE?

A. Yes. Most state engineering laws provide for the granting of a preregistration certificate to those persons who have not yet attained the requisite experience for full registration. This program is generally known as "Engineer-in-Training" registration, the requirements for which are usually graduation from an accredited engineering curriculum, plus the successful completion of an examination on fundamental engineering subjects. This program is designed primarily for those who have recently graduated from an engineering course, so that the first step toward registration may be taken while the subjects are still fresh in mind.

The successful applicants for EIT status are granted a certificate attesting to this fact. This certificate does not authorize the practice of engineering, but it does signify that the individual has successfully completed an examination in engineering fundamentals, which usually constitutes the first part of the examination given for full registration. After acquiring the necessary experience required under state law, the engineer-in-training need only successfully complete the second portion of the examination relating to his particular specialty. It is valuable to obtain an EIT certificate as soon as possible, although the applicant may be located in another state when he applies for full professional licensure. In most cases the state boards will recognize the EIT certificate of another state which is based on successful completion of a written examination. Credit for the EIT certificate is usually valid for a period of ten years.

11. HOW AND WHERE CAN I PREPARE FOR THE EXAMINATIONS?

A. Many industrial organizations, as part of their program of assistance to engineers seeking registration, sponsor comprehensive review courses on basic engineering subjects. In addition, many local chapters of the state societies of professional engineers sponsor review courses several times a year in preparation for their state examinations. Some engineering schools also provide assistance along these lines. Inquiries of your employer or local professional engineering organization should provide you with the place and date of the next review course. In locations where review courses have not been offered, groups of engineers seeking registration have found it advisable to organize their own courses with guest instructors for the particular subjects.

For those unable to attend an organized review program or those preferring to study alone, there are available several excellent publications on professional engineer refresher courses including sample questions and answers from past examinations. A bibliography of this material is on page 10.

12. Q. HOW MUCH WILL REGISTRATION COST ME?

A. Although you should check with your state board for the exact fees involved, generally \$15 is paid with the application and an additional \$10 upon successful completion of the registration procedure. For EIT certification, the total fee is generally \$10. In addition, there is an annual renewal fee of from \$1 to \$5, depending upon the state of registration.

As you can see, the cost of registration is modest and is a relatively insignificant price to pay for professional status. More importantly, the value of registration cannot be computed on a dollar and cents basis. The greatest value of registration is intrinsic—that sense of pride, confidence and achievement which comes with admission into a legally recognized profession.

13. Q. HOW DO I GO ABOUT IT?

A. The procedures for obtaining registration are not complex. If your employer has a positive program of assistance, you can probably receive valuable information and assistance from him regarding the necessary requirements, preparation of application forms and preparation for the examination. Or you may wish to contact your state society of professional engineers or its local affiliated chapter for information concerning registration in your state. Should you prefer, you can obtain

complete information regarding registration from the engineering registration board of the state in which you desire to become licensed. For your convenience and information, the full names and addresses of all state engineering registration boards appear on the last two pages of this pamphlet. Write to your state board for an application form and information about necessary requirements. The board will send you the necessary application forms and advise you regarding procedures to be followed.

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