



## President's Message

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**T**he topic of this month's issue of the *FES Journal* is aviation. Let me begin by saying that I am an environmental engineer and I know absolutely nothing about aviation. Well, that's not entirely true. I do know that your seat is supposed to be in the locked and upright position during takeoff and landing. And that those little bags of peanuts seem to be getting smaller and smaller. Oh yeah, one other thing—I will not set foot on a commercial flight without my iPod® and my noise-cancelling headphones. But, beyond that I'm pretty clueless. Fortunately for the health and safety of the public and air travelers everywhere, we are blessed with professional engineers who do know something about aviation. And a few of them have contributed excellent articles this month. I hope you enjoy them.

Now that I have made it perfectly clear that I cannot contribute anything related to aviation (unless the airport needs a water supply or wastewater treatment plant), I will discuss something I do know something about—the erosion of our profession.

### **What do I mean by "erosion?"**

It is a combination of things, which by themselves may seem innocuous. This erosion is happening by two different methods. The first occurs when we, or those working under our responsible charge, are required to be certified in a certain activity. A recent example is a requirement by the Department of Health for certification of personnel involved in site evaluations used in the design of onsite wastewater treatment systems. While professional engineers are exempt from the requirement, the issue remains whether individuals working under the direction of a professional engineer can legally perform site evaluations. The design must be, of course, sealed by a professional engineer. The requirement that another certification is required to perform onsite soils identification for work that must ultimately be sealed by a professional engineer undermines the concept of responsible charge. We have written the department requesting a clarification of this matter, but they do not agree with our position.

The second method of erosion is what we all know as "turf wars." For years, we have had ongoing dialogue with other professions over what constitutes "engineering"—and what these other professions can and cannot do as it relates to what we have been educated and trained to do.

In the past year or so, several state agencies have rewritten some of their rules to allow "appropriate registered professionals" to perform work, although the work defined is clearly engineering. The "appropriate registered professionals" include professional engineers, land surveyors, landscape architects and professional geologists. We have held discussions regarding this issue with the agencies and the various boards regulating the other professions.

These are a couple of examples of the erosion of our profession. As I mentioned, we have tried discussing these issues with the appropriate parties. When this doesn't work, we are not afraid to push for a legislative fix, if necessary. Be assured that we will continue to use every avenue available to us to protect our profession, while ensuring that the public health and safety is preserved. ■

