



Professional Engineers  
and Geoscientists of BC

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## **Continuing Professional Development Bylaw Background Information**

## Continuing Professional Development Bylaw

Members are being asked to ratify a bylaw committing practising members to undertake a minimum amount of professional development each year and to report annually that this requirement has been met. This will bring BC professional engineers and geoscientists into line with the vast majority of self-regulated professions as well as with their counterparts across the country.

### Why a Mandatory Program?

The question of whether to implement a mandatory continuing professional development (CPD) program has been long-standing for APEGBC. For the last two decades, the idea of professional development requirements has been considered by a number of committees, task forces and councils.

In making the decision to bring a bylaw to APEGBC members for ratification this fall, Council recognized that it is now standard for regulatory bodies to require professionals to participate in an ongoing professional development program. Almost all regulated professions in BC—this includes architects, doctors, lawyers and accountants—and most engineering and geoscience regulators in Canada require members to participate in and report their professional development activities. The ability to easily access professional development has also increased over the years, with options for greater flexibility and new distance learning technologies.

As a self-regulatory body, APEGBC must first and foremost act in the public interest. An Angus Reid survey conducted last year indicated that the public expects regulators to ensure that the professionals they license are competent and safe practitioners. One way that the public believes this is demonstrated is through requirements such as mandatory continuing professional development.

Currently APEGBC members may voluntarily report their continuing professional development hours. In 2008, 40.9% of practising members reported that they had participated in CPD during that calendar year. In today's work environment, requiring members to do a minimum amount of CPD may provide the necessary incentive for both professionals and their employers to prioritize keeping up to date. It will also provide the means through which the association can demonstrate to the public that its members are keeping current in their area of practice.

### Who must comply?

The bylaw applies to all registered members with practicing status. Members who have non-practicing status are exempt.

### Program Requirements

- A minimum of 30 hours of professional development activities must be done each year.
- Activities can fall within four categories:
  - Formal;
  - Informal;
  - Participation; and
  - Contributions to Knowledge.
- A *maximum* of 20 hours can be claimed in each category in a given year. There is no *minimum* requirement for a specific category. For example, members do not have to attend formal courses or seminars in order to be in compliance with the program.
- Content of professional development activities should be relevant to current or anticipated area of practice. Those who are practising technical engineering or geoscience would focus on activities that assist them in staying current with or upgrading their technical skills. Managers or those who wish to become managers would participate in activities that improve or develop management skills. Non-technical courses such as communication or business skills would also be considered as acceptable activities.
- Professional practice (work) is not considered an eligible activity for this program.

### **Carry Forward and Catch-Up Provisions**

- Members can carry forward excess earned hours to the immediate following year.
- Members who are unable to meet the 30 hour minimum in a given year and who do not have credits to carry forward from the previous year will be given until the end of the immediate following year to catch-up. The catch-up hours will be in addition to the hourly requirements of that following year.

### **Reporting**

- Compliance with CPD requirements will be reported by ticking a box and stating the total number of hours achieved on a form circulated with the annual dues renewal package. The form will be available online and in hard copy.
- The program will come into effect January 2011, with members filing their first report by March 1, 2012.

### **Auditing**

- Members will need to demonstrate how they are in compliance with the requirements upon request of the Association.
- Where possible, proof of activities undertaken (e.g., receipts, certificates) must be kept for four years.

### **Recognition of Other Mandatory CPD Programs**

The bylaw allows Council to approve and consider equivalent the continuing professional development programs of other organizations. In other words, if Council were to approve the Law Society's continuing professional development program as equivalent, members who are also members of the Law Society would only need to meet the requirements of that program to be considered in compliance with APEGBC's bylaw. It is also likely that programs of other Canadian professional engineering and geosciences regulatory bodies would be accepted as equivalent.

### **Facts at a Glance**

1. 30 hours of professional development activity will be required on a yearly basis for practising members.
2. Members can accrue professional development hours in a number of ways including: journal reading, courses, seminars, presentations, tradeshow, educational tours, mentoring and committee meetings.
3. Members do not need to attend formal courses or seminars in order to be compliant.
4. There is no requirement to attend APEGBC-sponsored or -accredited seminars. Courses, seminars, webcasts and conferences can be offered by any provider as long as members can demonstrate that the material presented is relevant to their current or planned field of practice.
5. Activities must relate to members' area of current practice but do not have to be technical engineering or geosciences based. Communication, management or business skills are acceptable activities.
6. Council will have the ability to exempt members from APEGBC's CPD Program if they are in compliance with another Council-approved CPD program.
7. All members with practising status will be required to comply. Those with non-practising status (e.g., retired members) will be exempt.
8. To report, members will be asked to tick a box to indicate compliance with professional development requirements and to indicate the total number of activity hours.
9. The program will come into effect January 2011, with members reporting by March 1, 2012.

## The Bylaw

### Continuing Professional Development

- 18 (1) Members and licensees shall complete every calendar year a minimum of 30 professional development hours (PDHs) in the professional development categories set out in subsection (2) of which a maximum of 20 PDHs can be in any one category.
- (2) Professional development categories are:
- (a) Formal – includes structured courses, programs or seminars that are at least 4 hours in length, practice review;
  - (b) Informal – includes self-directed study, seminars, conferences, educational field trips, trade shows;
  - (c) Participation – includes mentoring, attendance at technical or professional association meetings, service to the profession; and
  - (d) Presentations and Contributions to Knowledge – includes presentations, writing papers, developing codes and standards, conducting research, developing patents.
- (3) Members and licensees who have completed in any calendar year PDHs in excess of the professional development requirement in subsection (1) may carry forward their surplus PDHs one calendar year and use the surplus PDH towards satisfying that following year's professional development requirement. Surplus PDHs expire at the end of the calendar year following completion of the PDHs.
- (4) Active professional practice hours are not eligible as PDHs.
- (5) Members and licensees may be exempted from complying with subsection (1) if they have complied with the requirements of another continuing professional development program approved in advance by Council.
- (6) Members and licensees shall report each calendar year's PDHs by March 1 of the following year in a manner established by Council.
- (7) Members and licensees shall retain records of their PDHs for a minimum of four years and shall produce those records to the Association upon request.
- (8) If a member or licensee has not met the requirement set out in subsection (1), he or she shall have the following calendar year to fulfill that requirement. This shall not relieve the member or licensee from his or her obligation to meet that following year's professional development requirement under subsection (1).
- (9) Members who have been granted non-practising status are exempt from the requirements of this bylaw.
- (10) Members and licensees may apply to Council for an exemption from the requirements of this bylaw due to illness, parental leave or other legitimate reason as determined by council in its sole discretion.