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editorial

Loss Prevention

Join Us in Forming a New Program for Practice Excellence

By J. Isenberg, President, SEI Board of Governors

Most structural engineers are committed to excellence in the practice of their profession. This ideal arises from complex motives – among them are to serve specific clients and the public at large, to carry on the tradition of great accomplishments and to realize one’s own personal potential in an honorable profession. These lofty ideals often contrast to daily practice which can be contentious, untidy, anxiety-laden and – most insidiously – risky.

“...ultimately any kind of insurance is self-insurance to be paid by each of us...”

Each company chooses its own approach to risk management through a combination of improved practice and purchased insurance. Though each company’s methods differ, we all know that ultimately any kind of insurance is self-insurance to be paid by each of us, if not sooner then surely later. The current difficulty in obtaining affordable professional liability insurance – for some of us it may be called a crisis – demands fresh thought and quick action.

“...to make us aware of professional, legal and business issues...”

Many readers will recall that SERMC (Structural Engineers Risk Management Council) was created by DPIC at the request of a group of committed structural engineers. Its purpose was to educate and to motivate firms to improve their business and professional practices. DPIC offered incentives in the form of technical peer reviews, participation in profits and close collaboration with the Council of American Structural Engineers in exchange for participating in seminars and

conferences. These aimed to make us aware of professional, legal and business issues that, if not properly addressed, could lead to claims. The disbandment of SERMC left many firms and individual engineers without a forum for staying informed on these issues.

A group comprised of representatives from SEI, CASE, NCSEA and SERMC alumni is dedicated to creating a new forum whose goal is to manage and reduce risk through education. All firms interested in participating are invited to attend the first organizational meeting of the **Structural Engineering Loss Prevention Program**, to be held in Colorado Springs, CO on May 11, 2004 to discuss organization, funding and mission.

“...currently envisioned as an independent non-profit corporation...”

Examples of service that might be offered by the Loss Prevention Program include technical or practice peer reviews of member firms, model contracts, annual convocations, nationwide information on legal assistance and information on experts and their testimony. The Loss Prevention Program is currently envisioned as an independent non-profit corporation, managed by a Technical Director and governed by its own Board having strategic alliances with SEI, CASE and NCSEA and access to their committees, technology and management. Sustaining funding will come from member firms and individuals. Some startup funding may come from the three professional groups.

All interested firms are strongly urged to attend the organizational meeting in Colorado Springs. Watch this space for further details, or contact SEI staff representative Ms. Susan Richardson at suerichardson@asce.org.