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Both explicitly and implicitly, professional engineers agree to engage in activities to improve their level of technical and professional knowledge. Section 77 of Regulation 941 states that licensed engineers have a duty to the public “to act at all times with knowledge of developments in the area of professional engineering relevant to any services that are undertaken,” and “competence in the performance of any professional engineering services that are undertaken.”

Across Canada, the regulatory bodies licensing those practising law, medicine, accounting and architecture require practitioners to report professional development (PD) activities through various methods.

In Ontario, lawyers, except those formally excluded, are required to declare their activities to the Law Society of Upper Canada. “The establishment of minimum expectations for professional development is an important step in the implementation of the Law Society’s competence mandate.<sup>1</sup>” While there is no mandatory requirement to engage in professional development, lawyers are required to report any self-study and continuing legal education activities in which they participate.

The Society of Professional Accountants of Canada requires registered public accountants to complete 120 professional development hours over a three-year cycle. In Ontario, since January 2004, licensed public accountants have been required to track, retain supporting documentation, and report at least 20 hours of professional development each calendar year. In December 2006, that minimum was raised to 120 hours over a three-year period.

The Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) has the most formalized approach. They actively develop and offer courses to keep pace with the dynamics of the profession of architecture. The

## Professional development reporting important in evolving profession

Engineering, like all professions, is constantly evolving. Engineers are expected to keep up to date with changes as they affect their areas of practice to maintain their professional status—both in the eyes of the public and of their colleagues.

program, which the OAA administers to its 2500 licensed architects, comprises two main areas:

1. *Mandatory OAA Directed Program*—emphasizes knowledge and skills, where requirements are filled by taking courses or engaging in activities selected from a list the OAA Council has approved.
2. *Self-directed OAA Program*—includes activities that relate to an architect’s professional practice, which have been chosen by the individual architect.

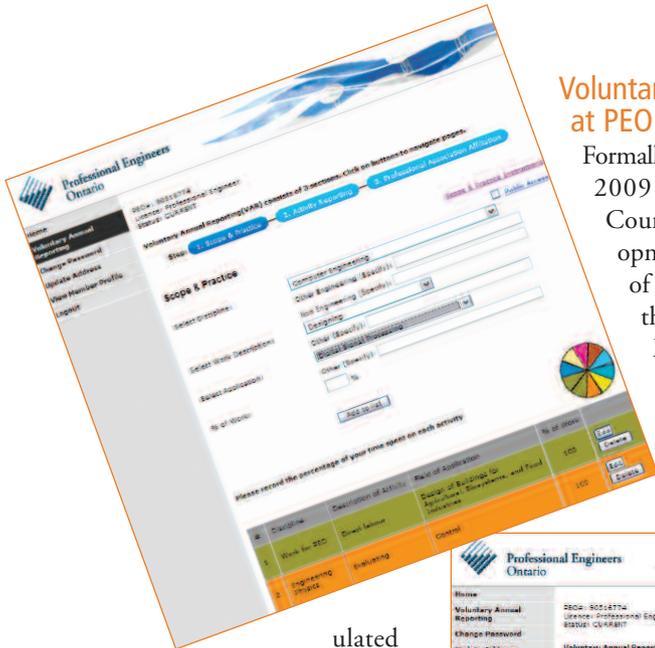
Since the mid-1990s, Canadian engineering associations have been asking their licence holders to report their professional development as part of their continuing professional competence requirements, citing the lack of mandatory continuing professional development as the element that keeps engineering from being viewed as a true profession.

Several engineering associations have been developing and implementing either voluntary or mandatory programs to report their licensees’ professional development.<sup>2</sup> PEO will soon join their ranks by providing a voluntary annual reporting (VAR) mechanism to enable PEO licence holders to record their continuing professional development, and areas of practice. This will provide consistency across the country, facilitate practice mobility, and provide PEO valuable information on the kinds of engineering work licensees do.

### Why should PEO have VAR?

1. PEO carefully assesses the academic credentials and prelicensing experience and knowledge of new entrants to the profession. However, education does not end after graduation, nor does it stop on obtaining an engineering licence to practise.
2. PEO as a self-regulating body is charged, by statute, to serve and protect the public interest. As such, PEO must be active, and be seen to be active, in establishing an approach that encourages and promotes the continuing competence of its members.
3. The requirement to maintain professional competence has its roots in the implied social contract between engineers and the public. The social contract asserts that an engineer, by virtue of his or her training, experience and knowledge of the limitations of his or her abilities, will provide, and continue to provide, competent engineering services.
 

Reporting of practitioner areas of practice and professional development activities will assist PEO to regulate the profession by identifying areas of practice or geographic locations where availability of or access to relevant professional development is limited.
4. The responsibility of licensing transcends the simple delivery of a licence certificate and seal. It means upholding the principle of a self-reg-



## Voluntary annual reporting at PEO

Formally introduced in the 2005-2009 Strategic Plan, PEO Council approved the development and implementation of a VAR mechanism, with the goal of rolling out by May 2007 a voluntary, member-maintained, online reporting mechanism that will enable engineers to easily

education, using a convenient, secure, online mechanism to enter, edit and delete activities.

2. Activities will be recorded on a yearly cycle.
3. There are no mandatory professional development hours associated with the program.

## What will engineers report?

VAR comprises three main sections:

1. *Scope and practice*
2. *Professional development activity reporting* within five general categories:
  - formal methods (structured courses or programs);
  - informal methods (e.g. seminars, conferences, technical field trips, trade shows);
  - participation (e.g. self-directed study, mentoring, committee meetings);
  - presentations (technical or professional presentations that are prepared and presented outside normal job functions); and
  - contributions to knowledge (e.g. presentations, writing papers, developing codes and standards).

Engineers will be asked to record the date(s) an activity occurred, and include a description and title of the activity and the organizer or provider of the activity (if applicable) and to categorize the activity by delivery method.

3. *Professional affiliation*  
Members can complete some or all of the sections or opt to make some or all of this information public through the Expanded Public Information Model (online member directory at [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca)).

The voluntary annual reporting mechanism will be available to all PEO members beginning in May. For more information, visit [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca).

## References

1. Law Society of Upper Canada, Member Resource Centre, <http://mrc.lsuc.on.ca/jsp/minExpectationforProfDev/index.jsp>.
2. "Mandatory Continuing Professional Development for Relicensing of Engineers" by C.R. Pennoni, *Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering, Education & Practice*, vol. 119, issue 4, pp. 338-345 (October 1993).

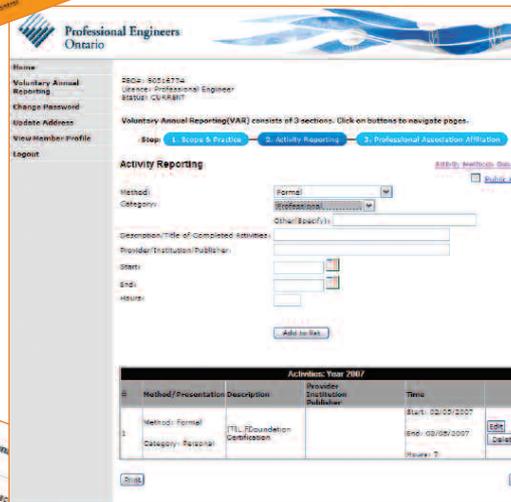
ulated profession and ensuring all practising engineers are held to the highest standards.

## Responsibilities of the engineer

The responsibility for assessing and maintaining an appropriate level of competence rests with each professional engineer. Just as it is the responsibility of each engineer to decide whether the demands of a specific project are within his or her training and experience, it is also the responsibility of each engineer to continually improve his or her knowledge and skills.

## Responsibilities of the regulator

Professional engineers, the public, government, employers and clients are increasingly aware of the rate of change in knowledge-based industries. As a regulator, PEO requires that the practice of engineering be conducted by competent, licensed engineers and therefore must be active in establishing an approach that encourages and promotes the continuing competence of its members.



PEO's online voluntary annual reporting program will allow engineers to fill in details of their scope and practice, professional development activity and professional affiliation.

record their individual professional development and their competencies.

## What does this mean for engineers?

1. Licence holders will be expected to update their personal profile of engineering services provided and continuing