

April 6, 2009

## **CPC COMPLETES INVESTIGATION; ADVISES SOCIETY OF TWO TECHNICAL ERRORS IN PRESS RELEASE**

The Committee on Professional Conduct of the American Society of Civil Engineers has concluded an in-depth investigation into allegations of ethical misconduct on the part of Society members and staff stemming from ASCE's role in the assessment of the performance of the New Orleans Hurricane Protection System following Hurricane Katrina. No charges of ethical misconduct against any of the individuals named were filed by CPC as a result of the inquiry, according to CPC Chair Rich Hovey, P.E., F.ASCE

During the course of its 13-month investigation, CPC members, supported by independent counsel, conducted numerous personal interviews and reviewed thousands of email communications and hundreds of pages of print documents. The CPC received full cooperation from all parties and is satisfied that it had access to all information relevant to these allegations.

The CPC discovered that the June 1, 2007, press release entitled "Move Beyond Sound-Bites and Armchair Theories to Make the Nation Safer from Disaster, Engineers Say," referring to a report of ASCE's External Review Panel ("ERP"), inadvertently conveyed a misleading impression regarding the role of engineering failures in the devastation of New Orleans by:

- asserting that "[t]he surge level in coastal Mississippi exceeded that of the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004," when in fact, the height of the Indian Ocean tsunami was greater than the surge level in coastal Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina. This resulted from a mathematical error discovered in the course of CPC's interview with the document's technical editor.
- incorrectly citing a scenario from the Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force estimating deaths and property damage in New Orleans that would have occurred even if the floodwalls had not breached. The referenced hypothetical scenario was based on assumptions that the levees breached as in Hurricane Katrina, interior pumping was as occurred in Hurricane Katrina, but that no breaching of floodwalls occurred. The IPET hypothetical scenario referenced within the ERP report assumed no breaching of the levees or floodwalls and 100 percent pump operation.

The CPC found that a clarification issued on June 15 insufficiently addressed this issue.

In response to the CPC findings, ASCE President D. Wayne Klotz, P.E., D.WRE, F.ASCE, thanked the members of the Committee on Professional Conduct and the members of the ASCE External Review Panel for their service to our profession and the nation.

“As engineers sworn to protect public health, safety and welfare, it is imperative that the public have confidence in our work,” Klotz said. “The work of the Committee on Professional Conduct should reaffirm confidence in the findings and recommendations generated by the significant body of scientific research related to the performance of the New Orleans Hurricane Protection System.”

Noting that ASCE is proud of the ERP's dedicated and thorough work, Klotz explained that much work remains to ensure that the citizens of New Orleans, and other communities protected by levees nationwide, can rely on the systems designed to protect them. Klotz also reaffirmed the commitment of ASCE and its members to continue pursuit of that goal.

The ERP report, which was the subject of the press release, remains available at <http://www.asce.org/files/pdf/ERPReport.pdf>.