



THE FORGE

Shaping the future, one design at a time!
Newsletter of the Birmingham Branch of ASCE

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Meeting Information for January 8th

Our monthly meetings are the first Thursday of each month at the Altadena Valley Golf and Country Club off of the Acton Road exit on I-459. Due to the holidays this month's meeting will take place on January 8th. The meetings start at 11:30 am.

The Club's address is 2651 Alta Vista Drive, Birmingham, Alabama 35243 and can be reached from the Acton Road exit just west of Highway 280 on I-459. The club's phone number is 205.967.5322. Please visit the website for maps and directions from your location.

The Branch has an agreement with Altadena Country Club for a minimum of 30 lunches each month. The price is \$14.00 per person, which you can pay to the Branch Secretary/Treasurer at the meeting or online at our website. We request that if you plan to attend the meeting and pay onsite, please contact Karen Phillips at 205-981-4547 or through the Branch's e-mail at bham.asce@gmail.com and indicate your plans no later than 10:00 A.M. January 6th. In order for Altadena to plan for the meals and to ensure enough food is available, we must indicate the total number of lunches required and once the branch confirms the RSVP list we are held accountable for that total amount regardless of the number of people attending. Therefore it is imperative that you indicate your plans no later than the fourth Friday of each month.

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Mark Your Calendars and Save the Dates!

- The Alabama Section Winter Meeting will take place on January 29, 2009 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
- The Section's Summer meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in Orange Beach on July 29th through August 2, 2009.
- The Alabama Transportation Conference is schedule to take place on February 2, 2009 in Auburn, Alabama.

January's Presenter

We are pleased to have Ms. Nancy L. Covert with Dale Carnegie Training to be our January lunchtime presenter. She will be discussing building relationships in the workplace. During this time she will discuss the importance of human interaction and how it is still relevant in today's high tech, fast past world.



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A Message from the President

By Bobby Nolen

'Tis the Season

I hope, in this season of the year, you find many meaningful moments of reflection, rejoicing, and resolve. The coming months may bring exciting and difficult challenges, as our Nation wrestles with circumstances unknown for generations. Engineers, by nature and training, accept challenges as opportunities to solve problems. May we all work, personally and professionally, to be a part of the solution. My hope and prayer for each of you is that the New Year brings you satisfaction in your strivings, peace and comfort with your loved ones, and abundant, good health.

Please note that:

- The January 2009 Branch meeting has been re-scheduled to the second Thursday because of New Year's Day and will be held on January 8, 2009.
- The Alabama Section Winter Meeting is on January 29, 2009, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, at the Bryant Convention Center. You should be getting e-mail information or mail-outs with details in the coming weeks.
- The Branch received the Draft By-laws, as a first reading, at December's meeting. I expect the Branch to consider the by-laws for revision and final adoption at January's meeting. Please find separately attached to the e-mail that delivered this newsletter a copy of the by-laws and written revisions that members have submitted thus far. The Alabama Section will review the final document for ratification or amendment. Please review the document and submit your comments to any of the By-laws Committee: Theresa Carter (Chairperson) (tcarter@neel-schaffer.com), Jonathan Byrd (jbyrd@ci.anniston.al.us), or Bobby Nolen (reepicheap@charter.net). We welcome your input and participation.
- A couple of companies have asked permission to place employment ads in our newsletter and on our web site. The Society has no objections to such ads, but I believe the Branch should have some policy statement in place to govern ad content, size, frequency, costs, and other matters. May I have two or three volunteers to work as a committee and draft a policy statement for the Branch's adoption to govern this area? Thanks.
- Engineers Without Borders-USA (EWB-USA) is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to partner with developing communities to improve their quality of life through the implementation of environmentally and economically sustainable engineering projects, while developing globally responsible engineers. The Society is supporting EWB's efforts, through an affiliation agreement, and seeks members at the Branch and Section levels to serve as liaisons between ASCE and EWB. If you are a member of or are interested in EWB and would serve as the Branch's liaison, please contact me.
- Branch dues are . . . uh, due. Actually, they are past due, as of October 1. I believe your participation in the Branch by attending meetings and serving would be important and significant to you. Taking a moment to write a check (\$10) to the Birmingham Branch ASCE would be important and significant to the Branch. Please do so now and send it to: Birmingham Branch ASCE, P. O. Box 190366, Birmingham, Alabama 35219. I appreciate it.

America's Aging Infrastructure

By Karen R. Phillips

Our country is growing with each passing day. The demands on utilities and infrastructures increase with our population. Much of our country's infrastructure was placed in service in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Since that time America has taken an attitude "if it isn't broke don't fix it." Today we are paying the price for our attitude. Each year as the budgets are made and our tax dollars are stretched to cover the many organizations needing funds, our aging infrastructure has more often than not been overlooked. Most people don't think about the need for maintenance and repair on our sewers, water lines, gas lines and even roads until it affects them personally. Let a community be without water or sewer a few hours and the phones are ringing off the hook at the utilities yet when it comes to providing funding for maintenance and up keep for those utilities no one wants to pay the extra fees.

The average life expectancy for large pipelines is around 120 years. The time is quickly approaching that we need to start replacing and repairing our infrastructure and unfortunately, we Americans have not been diligent and stored up funds for the operation and maintenance of these utilities over the last 120 year and now we are faced with 1.6 trillion dollar need to improve our country's infrastructure up to barely adequate conditions according to ASCE.

ASCE has recommended Congress enact the National Infrastructure Improvement Act and the National Infrastructure Bank Act. The Infrastructure Act would establish National Commission on Infrastructure of the United States to study the condition and capacity of our infrastructure and recommend improvements. The Bank Act would establish an independent entity of the federal government to provide funding for qualified infrastructure projects.

As engineers, we more than most understand the need for budgeting and preparing for operation and maintenance cost to our infrastructure, yet for the last 120 years we have sat silent. I urge you to remember why you became an engineer and not sit idly by for the next 120 years. Remember, we vowed to practice our profession with conscience and dignity. To apply our skills with the utmost respect for the well being of humanity and the earth. By not educating our government leaders to the importance of our nations infrastructure directly contradicts why most of us became engineers.

Let 2009 be the year that you speak up and use your knowledge. Band together with ASCE and our government ensure that infrastructure investments are made in the most effective way possible. Keep abreast of developments on these important issues by checking the Government Relations website at <http://www.asce.org/govrel> and the Our Falling Infrastructure <http://blogs.asce.org/govrel/> blog. In addition, see testimony http://www.asce.org/pressroom/publicpolicy/testimony_correspondence.cfm given by ASCE leaders on infrastructure as stimulus earlier this fall. Also, be prepared to contact your newly elected members of Congress once they take office on January 6, 2009 in support of wise and prudent infrastructure investment.

Make a difference this year. Start today!

Alabama's State Water Policy

The Alabama Water Resources Commission endorsed a legislative committee's efforts to create a state water management plan—but a strategy for drought-stricken Alabama still could be two years away, said state Rep. Greg Canfield, R-Vestavia Hills and co-chairman of the committee. According to Canfield the committee will need up to two more legislative sessions to produce an initial water management plan.

Canfield said the plan will grow and change with the state. The committee must make an initial report and recommendations by the 15th legislative day of the 2009 legislative session, which starts in February. Some recommendations the committee is considering for the initial report include expanding the rainfall-monitoring network, creating a real-time groundwater monitoring network and establishing data collection and storage standards across all agencies.

Montgomery advertiser.com (December 12, 2008)

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