Spring Seminar Looks at Personal Liability

What kind of personal liability, if any, do healthcare engineers and facility managers face as they do their jobs every day?

Three panelists will speak to this issue at the NEHES Spring Seminar - John McElhinney, council, Ropes & Gray, environmental regulatory matters; Richard C. Bowen, senior consultant, Arthur D. Little, Inc.; and Robert Turk, manager, healthcare regulatory affairs, Landis & Gyr. This topic was chosen because some NEHES members have asked for more information about possible liability, according to Dick Harris, Spring Seminar chairman.

The Spring Seminar schedule March 20 is:
8-9 a.m.: Registration and continental breakfast, Room 311, Hynes Convention Ctr.;
9-noon: Personal Liability seminar, Room 311, Hynes;
12-1:30 p.m.: NEHES luncheon, Room 312, Hynes;
1:30 p.m.: General visit to the NEHA show.

If you have not received a mailing about the Spring Seminar, call Dick at (802) 334-3282. Register in advance or at the door.

Annual Retreat is a Time for Discussion

The board's annual retreat was once again a time for discussion and reflection, getting board members away from daily distractions to look at NEHES issues in depth.

Held December 1-2, the meeting attracted 22 members. "It's an opportunity to focus on where we're going, to better serve our membership," according to Don Garrison, NEHES vice president. "You get a chance to brainstorm, to talk about our goals and different ideas we have."

"The retreat also gives attendees a chance to talk about issues that are too lengthy to deal with in two-hour board meetings," said Mark Cappello, new NEHES president. "The participants wrestled with a number of issues that have escaped resolution for a number of years," he said.

"They always come up but they never get closure."

Key assignments resulting from the retreat were:
Membership Committee, Joe Mona, chair: Notify potential members; Study the feasibility of paying state, NEHES and ASHE dues with one check; Work with adjoining states such as New York to attract more members, now permitted to join NEHES after last year's bylaws changes.

Education Committee, Don Pugh, chair: Seed money by NEHES; Coordination of events; Spring/Fall Seminars; Education protocol; Education presentation by members at seminars.

Newsletter Committee, Dan Ayres, chair: How best to do the newsletter.

Fall Seminar to Help Us Prepare for the Future

"Preparing for XXI," the 21st century, is the theme of this year's Fall Seminar October 29 - November 1.

"We're anticipating a program with two sequential tracks," said Chairperson Mark English. "The first track will address immediate issues of significant concern to members in November, 1996. The second part of the track is anticipating issues of significant concern in January, 1999."

Seminar days are Oct. 30 and Nov. 1, with evening registration October 29 at the Radisson Hotel, New London, CT. The venegr show will take place nearby at Port and Starboard. An informational mailing will go out to members two months before the seminar. Anyone wishing to help with seminar arrangements should call Mark at (860) 545-2661.

Dan Ayres (left) presented NEHES president Mark Cappello with the VEHS' first annual Vermont Hospital Engineer of the Year award at the chapter's meeting in December.
President is Grateful for NEHES Membership

Being NEHES president, Mark Cappello believes, is an excellent way to give something back to the Society and profession that have given so much to him.

NEHES membership has meant "an opportunity to network and communicate with my peers, to share and gain relevant information of pertinence to me and my hospital," Mark said. He joined 10 years ago, and calls himself a "new member" compared to others in NEHES, which was organized in 1958. "The longevity is just fantastic. A couple of the founders just retired a few years back, and sometimes they come to annual meetings or seminars."

When asked to run for president, he didn't hesitate. "I'm thrilled at the vote of confidence and the opportunity to serve the membership in this important capacity in times of such great change in the healthcare industry."

He has also been the Society's representative and alternate representative for Vermont, secretary, vice president, president-elect, and newsletter editor.

The Society provides excellent educational opportunities, with seminars presented by recognized experts on timely subjects and contact with important vendors, he said. "Our message is that we're stronger together than we are as individuals. There is a wealth of information that we possess collectively. The programs and seminars give members information in order to do their jobs better."

He hopes to see the Society obtain a modest membership growth, but acknowledges that may be difficult. "It's tough with cutbacks. The things that seem to suffer are travel and education budgets.

We're at the time where it's important to network and obtain more information, but simultaneously we're at a time where those are the areas that are suffering. In departmental budgets, those items take the biggest hits."

Mark's background in math and physics led him to his first healthcare position, at Community General Hospital in Syracuse, then to Copley Hospital, Morrisville, VT and to Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital in St. Johnsbury. He started a new position as director of engineering, Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, in Bennington, this year and is also working towards an MBA.

Membership Wants More than the Status Quo

Joe Mona's Membership Committee knows that keeping NEHES' membership at 266 will be a challenge.

"The first people to get merged in or out are your support people," Joe said. "Downsizing and merging are real issues. This is such a volatile industry."

When two hospitals who are NEHES members merge, both memberships can be cancelled. Hospitals may put some functions in the hands of outside contractors, or Housekeeping, Engineering, and other departments are combined under a Facilities position. The end results are the same: more NEHES memberships may be eliminated.

Joe's group isn't letting this trend stop plans for modest membership growth. "A change in our bylaws has opened it up to more peripheral people outside those directly related to maintenance like biomedical and safety people," he said. Another positive sign is the dramatic increase in NEHES participation by Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire chapters.

Membership also plans to revitalize Massachusetts' Middlemac chapter. Joe hopes potential members who say Boston chapter meetings aren't convenient will join this chapter instead. With John Crowley's help, Joe said, Membership hopes to make the Middlemac chapter as active as it once was.

Members occasionally come from states adjoining the New England region. These are people who work at great distances from their appropriate chapters as do some New Yorkers, who might attend Vermont chapter meetings. "We're not going to say no to a hospital person who is looking for a place to enhance his career with education, information, and assistance," Joe said.

Membership will also study how members might pay chapter and NEHES dues with one check.

From Your Editor

Hi, I'm your newsletter editor, and I'd sure appreciate any stories you'd like to send me for future issues. Even if you have a story idea, send it along and we'll help you develop it. Too many photos of me in this issue? Send yours instead! We'll do our best to use them. My phone is (802) 656-5903; my fax is (802) 656-4850, or send me items in care of Facilities Services, Fletcher Allen Health Care, MCHV Campus, 111 Colchester Ave., Burlington, VT 05401.

Thanks,

Dan Ayres

Ralph Williams (left) retired Dec. 31 from Southwestern Vermont Medical Center.
Dan Ayres and the VEHS recognized him for his service to the Society and to his profession at the VEHS meeting in December.
New England States' Reports

Maine Report
The State of Maine Hospital Engineers Society held its first meeting on January 25, 1996, with 11 members present. After lunch, a brief business meeting was held and the following topics were discussed:
1. A current set of bylaws cannot be found for the Society by the President. All members were asked to review their files and see if they might have a copy. If a copy cannot be found, a new set of bylaws will be a must for 1996.
2. Society dues' notices have gone out to all members. An appeal was made to pay them by the President and Treasurer.
3. Bob O'Branovich from the Barron Center discussed the possibility of having the Society work with the State of Maine Long Term Care Facilities Group. The President will meet with Bob to discuss this further.
4. Future meetings and topics include: Isolation Rooms in February, Fire Stopping in March, Statement of Conditions in April, and Air Dust, Exhaust Dust Cleaning and Maintenance in May.

The Company Abatement Professionals of Portland, Maine gave a presentation on lead and asbestos abatement. Lead paint and piping are a problem that some of us may be facing in the future.

With all business being concluded, the meeting was adjourned.

Jeffrey Thomas,
President, State of Maine Hospital Engineers Society

Massachusetts Report
Due to the absence of our chapter representative, I will include a brief report from Western Mass:
Our plates are full in the Western Mass chapter getting reorganized, so I don’t think we'll be hosting any educational programs this year. The members are ready to attend meetings held by other chapters though.

We met for the third time since the reorganization on January 11 at the Baystate Medical Center in Springfield. I believe there were 16 members attending. The attendance has been increasing consistently. Good sign! We set up meeting places for the next four months, discussed dues, our affiliation with NEHES, set up committees to review and write new bylaws, and are generating a new application/renewal to bring all members to a voting status. We took volunteers for the vacant positions of Secretary and Treasurer. One of these folks is a new face to hospital engineering. Here we grow again. We also set the agenda for the next meeting.

On another note I'm proud to say my hospital has just released our second outside management company in less than one year. Servicemaster got the axe after 26 years managing Environmental Services. You know what? The hospital is cleaner than ever. Now, nine months later, Marriott was severed after a 24-year stint. Could this be the start of a new trend? We saved over $60K on Environmental the first year. More to come on this later.

Kurt E. Peterson,
Secretary, NEHES

Rhode Island Report
On December 8, 1995 a meeting of the Rhode Island Healthcare Engineer's Society was held at South County Hospital at 12:00 p.m. At the meeting, lengthy discussion to finalize the Bylaws for the Society continued. The Bylaws were approved by unanimous vote with accepted changes. The election of officers was held from the nominations received. The following officers were decided upon by unanimous vote by those attending:
President: Peter W. Grafe
Vice President: Kenneth W. Scosna
Secretary: Don Svendsen
Treasurer: Philip Dinsky
State Rep. alternate: Wallace Brown

The Officers will continue in their positions on a temporary basis until the election at the Annual Meeting that will be held in June.

In addition to the election of officers, I received a unanimous vote to represent the State as a member of the Board of Directors for the New England Healthcare Engineer's Society from January 1, 1996 through December 31, 1996.

The membership list of the R.I. Healthcare Engineer's Society was distributed for approval. Speaking for all present, we would like to encourage all persons having supervisory responsibility to be solicited for membership. I feel very strongly about membership because our greatest resource as a Society is the energy and experience we bring to one another through networking.

Since our last meeting, James Gilmore of Newport Hospital has requested an appointment as the 1997 Fall Seminar Chairperson. As you know, Rhode Island is the host state for the 1997 NEHES Fall Seminar. At our Officer's Meeting on January 12, we unanimously appointed Jim Gilmore to this position.

Our last order of business was to develop a five-month meeting schedule, holding meetings on the second Friday of the month at 12:00 p.m. The schedule is as follows:
April 12, 1996: General Society Meeting - South County Hospital
May 10, 1996: General Society Meeting - Miriam Hospital
June 14, 1996: General Society Meeting - Rhode Island Hospital

Sincerely,
Robert W. Okerson,
Director of Maintenance and Security, Saint Elizabeth Home

Vermont Report
Gordon Lewis hosted the last meeting of VHES at Copley Hospital January 19, 1996. Those present enjoyed a tour of the new wing and renovation, a great lunch, and a very informative presentation on indoor air quality.
Tom Brosio of ATC Environmental Company presented a very informative program about indoor air quality. Tom covered the types, symptoms, sources, and investigation of IAQ. Problems specific to hospitals such as tuberculosis, steam humidification, laboratories, nitrous oxide and ethylene oxide were discussed. Perhaps one of the most important points covered was one of public relations. Explaining the process of investigation and being truthful generally help in gaining the confidence and cooperation of those affected.

The hand-outs contained useful information in diagnosing IAQ problems, chemical-free humidification, and references. Tom presented the material well and we shared several of our experiences.

Dick Harris is proceeding very well with the plans for the Spring Seminar. The program is taking shape and will consist of a panel discussion on regulatory requirements. Those slated to assist with the program are Theron Manning, Tobey Clark, Joe Kaczmarek, and Robert LeBlanc. Look for some communication on registration before February.

Dick Harris suggested a notebook be kept on our educational program. This will serve as our reference and for future programming. The next educational program will be sponsored by TSP and is on electronic magnetic interference. Rutland will host the next meeting of the VHES on April 19, 1996. Brookfield Service will present a program on generator testing.

Lindsay Carroll indicated that dues are starting to come in. Several members paid their dues at the meeting. If anyone needs a membership list, let Lindsay know.

Dan Ayres reported that NEHES is reviewing membership questions and is striving to provide some excellent educational opportunities. Dan is the newly-elected newsletter editor. I'm sure he would welcome an article or two from our membership.

Lindsay Carroll,
VHES Secretary