Tom O’Sullivan is the NEHES Engineer of the Year

Just a few short months ago, Tom O’Sullivan’s professional colleagues named him the Member in the Spotlight from the Western Mass Society of Healthcare Engineers. Now he is “in the spotlight” again, as the NEHES Engineer of the Year, selected by his peers for the highest award NEHES gives to individuals.

Tom was thrilled by the news. “I was tickled, absolutely delighted,” he said. “This brings to a closure all my years in the health care system.”

Earlier this year, Tom retired from a 32-year career at Baystate Medical Center (Springfield, MA), and opened a home inspection service.

The NEHES Engineer of the Year award grew out of former NEHES President Don Garrison’s desire to recognize engineers for their contributions. Mark Cappello, Director of Engineering at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (Bennington), received the first award, in 1997.

Candidates are nominated by their peers and judged on their service to NEHES, the healthcare engineering profession, their institution, their state chapter, and to other engineers during the most recent calendar year. Recipients receive a plaque and cash award of $500, representing travel and lodging reimbursement at Fall Conference. Normally, the award is presented at Fall Conference, but due to his business schedule, Tom couldn’t attend. NEHES officers presented his award in Northampton, MA this month during the annual NEHES board retreat.

Nomination Committee members this year were Mark English, chair, and Director of Engineering at Hartford (CT) Hospital; Jeff Thomas, Manager of Support Services, Mercy Hospital (Portland, ME); and Mark Cappello.

Support for Tom was unanimous. One member wrote on his behalf, “Tom is retired this year, but in 1997, as in every year I have known him, he has given of himself to NEHES, WMSHE, and his institution.”

A resident of Westfield, MA, Tom came to the United States from his native Ireland in 1961. He joined Baystate Medical Center as a staff carpenter in 1965, eventually rising to Manager of Maintenance for Baystate Health Systems. He earned the designation of Certified Professional Manager after studying at Holyoke Community College.

He joined NEHES 11 years ago, and has served as Public Relations officer and member of several committees. Tom also serves as WMSHE treasurer and always helps on chapter projects.

He has realized his lifetime dream of earning a private pilot’s license, and he and his wife, Darlyne, enjoy flying.

One of NEHES’ Own Is ASHE President

Bob Loranger, Director of Facilities at New England Medical Center (Boston) and ASHE president-elect, will become ASHE’s president on January 1.

Currently NEHES secretary, Bob will also move ahead to the position of NEHES president-elect. In the year 2000, he’ll be president of NEHES.

Bob will spend one-third of the coming year away from Boston, but he’ll do so without regrets. “You could never repeat this valuable experience again in your career,” he said.

Save March 30 for a Very Educational Spring Seminar!

The NEHES Spring Seminar will present two speakers addressing topics of critical concern to all members - Life Safety Code changes, Sentinel Events, and Statement of Conditions updates.

Eugene A. Cable, PE, FPE, and Philip R. Jose, PE, both Safety and Fire Protection engineers, VA Healthcare Network, Upstate New York, will be the instructors.

The Seminar will be held Tuesday, March 30 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Leominster, MA, site of the 1998 Spring Seminar.

The Seminar’s schedule is:
-8:30 - 10 a.m.: “Fire versus People” Primer for Performance - Based Life Safety; explains fire safety time-based model, provides excellent baseline understanding of Life Safety Code intent, continued on page 3

See the Fall Foliage! Travel to Vermont for Fall Conference 1999

If you’ve always wanted to see Vermont’s fall foliage or make a return trip to the Green Mountain State, you’ll have a chance to do so for Fall Conference 1999.

The annual Conference will be held Monday, October 4 through Friday, October 8 at the Sheraton Burlington Conference Center, South Burlington. The Vermont Healthcare Engineers Society is planning the event.

Committee chair and phone numbers are:
-Chair: Bob Cummings, Supervisor/Construction Management Services, Fletcher Allen Health Care (Burlington), (802) 651-8431;
-Education: Tobey Clark, Director of Technical Services, University of Vermont (Burlington), (802) 656-3255, and Mark Cappello, Director of Engineering, Southwestern Vermont Medical Center

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Here and There at Fall Seminar

Contributed by Dick Vargo
Director of Engineering Services
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center

NEHES’ first off-shore Seminar brought speakers, vendors, members, spouses, and special guests (ASHE executive director Joe Martori and ASHE president A.J. Verrichia) to Bermuda’s Marriott Castle Harbour Resort November 9-12.

Members of the New Hampshire Healthcare Engineers Society planned the event.

The educational program was praised for its diversity and thoroughness. Attendees enjoyed a large vendor show, and 39 persons played during the golf tournament.

Participating in the tournament were 11 NEHES members, 25 vendors, and three guests, including Joe Martori.

Winners included Steve Shaw of the Southern New Hampshire Regional Medical Center tying Ray Capone of ASCO for low individual gross with a score of 81. Low individual net was won by sandbagger Allen Paul of Siemens Building Technology, with a score of +14 in the quota system scoring format.

The low team net winner was an all-vendor team from Southworth Milton and ASCO, consisting of Joe Torro, Ray Capone, Jack Petro, and Jim Viera.

Steve Cutter of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center was a “non-contributing” member of the second low team net winners. Kurt Peterson of Cooley Dickinson Hospital won the long drive competition (and then double bogied the hole). Steve Shaw won closest to the pin on hole number 13 (he won two new putters).

Most of the prizes awarded were from participating vendors. Sprague Energy provided some additional excitement with hole-in-one contests on all of the par 3’s including a $10,000 prize on hole #5. Unfortunately, no one took home any of those prizes.
President’s Comments

NEHES Members Should be Proud of Their Many 1998 Achievements

By Kurt Peterson
NEHES President

It is with mixed emotions that I write my final president’s column for 1998. NEHES is an ever-changing Society, each year hopefully building on what was accomplished the year before.

Even though every president leaves office thinking of the things they could have accomplished, 1998 was a great year for NEHES and there is much that we all can be proud of.

• The “Levels of Affiliation” through ASHE is a wonderful program in which NEHES has a very fine record of accomplishment. During 1998 at the annual conference in Denver, we received the Gold Level Award for accomplishments in education, newsletter, advocacy, membership, and special achievement during 1997. This entitles us to one free attendee at the ASHE annual conference for the following year. Since we budgeted to send our president-elect and president to this great conference each year, this is a huge savings. Your board has been working diligently to achieve this award again in 1998. The part that we need help with is membership in ASHE. As Joe Martori, ASHE’s executive director, told us at our Fall Conference, you receive about $250 worth of material for your $100 ASHE membership fee. It is a great professional tool for us all.

• Rick Malmstrom sent out a questionnaire asking for feedback on what you want to see covered in educational programming. Over 60 percent returned your needs to us. This is a great response and the only way we can be sure you get what you need.

• The Maine chapter, particularly Jeff Thomas, hosted a wonderfully successful Spring Seminar covering JCAHO Environment of Care changes. This was the first time we held our Seminar away from Boston for as long as I can remember. The presentation was held in Leominster, MA and was attended by about 115 of our members.

• We put on our first video-teleconference covering the JCAHO sentinel event policy. This will definitely be an increasingly more popular way for our members to receive the education they need without having to travel great distances to do so.

• There was a strengthening of relations with the great state of New York spearheaded by Jack Gosselin, our ASHE Region I representative. We helped their chapters with development of bylaws and saw many New York NEHES members and friends at our educational programs.

• We presented a $2,000 scholarship to a very deserving recipient named Josh Morong from the University of New Hampshire. From the accomplishments he has already made, there is no doubt in my mind that Josh will produce some amazing advances in healthcare engineering during his career.

• With an incredible effort by the New Hampshire chapter, chairman Tom Humphrey and crew put on NEHES’ first and very successful off-shore Fall Conference in Bermuda. The pricing was held low due to great negotiations, the educational programming was wonderful, and the conference was well attended by both members and vendors. My discussions with attendees were all very positive. I will be sending out a critique of this event to our members and vendors at large.

• Our 1998 secretary, Bob Loranger, was voted to the prestigious position of ASHE president-elect. Bob will automatically become the 1999 president of ASHE. This is a wonderful accomplishment for Bob and, as the immediate past president of ASHE, he will take over the helm of NEHES during the year 2000! What great timing. What a wonderful benefit to all of us in NEHES.

• All our 1998 bylaws amendments were passed unanimously at our annual meeting. This is what I am most proud of for 1998. We are now a much more compassionate NEHES toward our members who, beyond any control of their own, became ineligible for membership in NEHES per our bylaws. We will include these amendments in the next issue of the newsletter.

• For 1998, we welcomed Ms. Dawn LeBaron, Director of Security, Safety, and Engineering at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, to the NEHES board as our Public Relations chair. This will definitely bring some diversity to the board and we won’t be able to be known as the “good ole boys’ network.” Thanks to efforts by Joe Mona who not only approached Dawn but also to our new Boston chapter representative, Kevin Keating. This position has been vacant since Joe relocated to Lawrence. Kevin is Director of General Services at Shriner’s Hospital in Boston, and we are hoping to grow our relationship both with him and the Boston chapter.

• Since Joe Mona has moved to Lawrence, we are seeing new energy in the Middelmac chapter. Knowing Joe, as we all do, I’m sure Middelmac will regain its place as one of the largest chapters in NEHES. A special thanks to Joe. Here is a man who has spent the last 16 (going on 30) years on the NEHES board as a volunteer for you!

• Our slate of officers for 1999 was passed unanimously. I am confident of their abilities to grow this great Society. I will end this column by saying just what a rewarding experience holding the position of president of NEHES has been. Yes, there is a lot of work accompanying it, but the feeling of cooperation from the dedicated volunteer members of the board and the interaction with the membership is well worth it all. I’m sure that under the leadership of Mark English, NEHES will end the century with a bang. Here’s to all of you in healthcare engineering and management!

Spring continued from page 1.

video examples of real fires.

-10:30 a.m. * noon: “Proposed Changes to the 2000 Life Safety Code” and recent AHJ Health Care Interpretations Committee decisions, impact on SOC, and build/design features cost savings.

-1-2:30 p.m.: “Recent Health Care fires and a JCAHO Sentinel Event;” reviews several recent fires, large and small, anonymously, focusing on lessons learned, topics of related litigation, and a sample sentinel event report for a patient fire fatality.

-3-4:30 p.m.: “SOC Updates for Year 2000,” explaining the latest changes and fire-safety-related Environment of Care standards changes.

The Connecticut Healthcare Engineers Society is planning the event. Joe Woiczynski, Assistant Director of Engineering at Hartford Hospital and CHES secretary, is chair. Assisting are Caleb Cutler, Manager, South Campus, Hartford Hospital, and Mark English, Director of Engineering at Hartford Hospital. Mark is also president of CHES and of NEHES (effective January 1).

Registration and hotel reservation information will be sent in January. □
NFPA Update


By Eugene A. Cable, PE, FPE
Safety and Fire Protection Engineer
VA Healthcare Network
Upstate New York
Albany, NY

The purpose of this article is to alert you to probable changes in Code:

• So you can save money, avoid repairs where no longer necessary, avoid project costs where Code changes negate old requirements, or be prepared where Code changes might require new design features. Mr. Fishbeck, JCAHO, states that updates to the Life Safety Code can be utilized by a medical facility as long as the entire new edition is used. In other words, they would not hold us to the 1997 edition if we can take advantage of 2000 edition changes.

NFPA Forms New Healthcare Interpretations Task Force

By Eugene A. Cable, PE, FPE

There is a new Healthcare Interpretations Task Force consisting of four voting individuals representing four authorities having jurisdiction.

Chair is Robert Solomon, NFPA, non-voting. Others are: Walt Smittle, FMANA (Fire Marshals), voting; James Merrill, HCFA, voting; Phil Jose, VA, voting; Dean Samet, JCAHO, voting; Tom Jaeger, AHCA, non-voting; and Doug Erickson, ASHE, non-voting.

The group’s first official meeting was in September. It is not clear where and how these interpretations will be officially published, and whether the language will be exactly as printed here. The two decisions listed here are final and do not conflict with Life Safety Code language. The JCAHO stated that this information might not reach all their surveyors until January, 1999 training.

98-1 question: Was it the intent of the Life Safety Code prior to the 1988 Edition to permit doors in the means of egress of health care facilities to be locked where the clinical needs of the patients required specialized security, provided staff can unlock the doors at all times?

Answer: Locking of these doors is acceptable as stated. Background: this comes up where AHJ’s are using earlier additions of the Code and not permitting nursing homes to lock Alzheimer’s units since they are not mental health facilities. The time delay locks are inadequate for Alzheimer’s units.

98-2 question 1: (NFPA 101, 1997 Edition) Is it the intent of 12-3.6.2.1 and 13-3.6.3.1 to require conformance with NFPA 80, Fire Doors and Windows, for non-rated corridor doors?

Answer 1: No.

98-2 question 2: Would a non-rated corridor door, provided with an average one inch undercut, be an acceptable arrangement?

Answer 2: Yes.

The following issues were also discussed and status as noted:
• (Sec. 12-2.5.2) Patient sleeping suites - by Code, is constant observation intended for any suite that has more than eight beds? - Further study.
• (Sec. 12-1.1.4.5) Better define “major renovation” for interpretation as to when sprinkler protection is required. - Tabled, impossible to reach agreement.
• (Sec. 7-7.6 and appendix A-7-7.5) Can normal clinical staff act as the fire watch when fire alarm or sprinkler impairment lasts more than four hours? Specific to an occupied healthcare area; yes, given certain conditions. - Status: the particulars and specific language pending for Fire Marshal’s agreement.
• (Sec. 12-13-3.2.6) When used for grease-producing cooking, must residential type stoves/ranges in health care occupancies be protected in accordance with NFPA 96? - Further study.

2. Occupancy classification: Ambulatory Health Care. There is a serious attempt to make all clinics “Ambulatory Health Care” regardless of the number of patients rendered incapable of self preservation. (Sec. 12-13-1.3). This would make “Business Occupancy” unacceptable for any clinic. All outpatient clinics would become health care occupancy. Committee rejected this but we should watch closely.

3. A proposal to permit automatic (smoke detector) release hold open devices on vertical openings, such as doors, was rejected. (This is trouble. For example, even existing laundry chute doors could not be held open by any means (Sec. 12-13-2.2.2.6).)

4. For new high rise fire protection systems, fire alarm, telephone, elevator controls, etc., the entire high-rise package for new facilities will be required (Sec. 12-4.2)(Sec. 32-8).

5. A proposal to allow up to 10,000 square feet, Ambulatory Health Care, with no smoke barrier wall if sprinkler protected (12/13-6.3.7.2) barely passed committee. Currently Code requires a smoke barrier over 5,000 square feet. This is a good example of where your comments would be helpful, otherwise this proposed change might not pass final muster.

6. A proposal to accept a building separation wall (usually two-hour fire rated) as the smoke barrier wall for an Ambulatory Health Care addition was rejected (Sec. 12-6.3.7.2).

7. A proposal change to fire plan requirements giving greater emphasis to patient relocation/evacuation horizontally by smoke zone was accepted. (Sec. 12-13-7.2)

8. The committee accepted a proposal to allow one class lower interior flame spread, even in corridors, for sprinkler protection (Sec. 12-13-3.3.2).

9. A proposal to require that existing high-rise health care facilities be sprinkler protected (Sec. 13-3.5.2) was rejected. You might want to comment on that.

10. “Compliance with NFPA 80 shall not be required. Undercuts of 1 inch or less are permitted in corridor doors.” (Sec. 12-13-3.6.3.3). This applies to doors other than required fire doors such as exit stair doors. This was accepted for the 2000 Life Safety Code but by recent interpretations may be acceptable in January 1999. (see related article, Question 2).
Vermont Chapter Existed Informally for Several Years

For many years, Vermont healthcare engineers relied on each other for information and help with common problems, communicating informally by phone or in person.

In 1972, when they realized that at least one engineer in every Vermont hospital was a NEHES member, it seemed like the time had come to formalize their relationship.

Ralph Henry, Jim Lawson, Albert Jones, and Theron Manning (now Director of Plant Operations, Gifford Medical Center, Randolph, VT) formed an ad hoc committee to draw up a bylaws agreement for what would become the Vermont Hospital Engineers Society, Ralph recalled.

“We sent the agreement around for everyone to look at,” said Ralph, retired from the Medical Center Hospital of Vermont (Burlington), now Fletcher Allen Health Care. “In the fall of 1973 or 1974 we formalized it when just about all of us attended the NEHES meeting that year.”

VHES now has 41 members, and meets six to eight times a year at members’ institutions. Members hold various job titles, Directors of Engineering, Facilities, or Maintenance; others are Supervisors, Lead Maintenance persons, Project Managers, or Maintenance Supervisors.

VHES goals for 1998 and 1999 include increasing membership and enhancing network, training, and educational opportunities, according to Society President Gordon Lewia. “We want to make this a more tightly-knit group,” he said. The Society will also host Fall Seminar 1999, and planning started two years ago (see related story).

Other Society officers are both employed at Fletcher Allen Health Care. Bob Cummings, vice president, is the Supervisor of Construction Management Services, and Dave Keelty, VHES secretary/treasurer, is the Director of Facilities Management and Environmental Services.

Gordon, the Director of Plant Operations at Copley Hospital (Morrisville), joined the hospital 11 years ago after working many years as a mechanical contractor. Membership to VHES followed shortly after, and to NEHES, four years ago.

“Mark Cappello was the engineer here,” he said. “He thought it would be good for me to be involved in training and networking, so I joined VHES.”

VHES, Gordon said, made his transition from Maintenance to Director of Plant Operations easier. “I would have had a much more difficult time if I had not had access to this group and the support of the other engineers, especially Dan Ayres, Joe Kaczmarek, and Theron Manning.” Dan was the Vice President for Facilities Services at FAHC and Joe is Director of Plant Facilities at Central Vermont Medical Center (Berlin).

Bob Cummings was hired by FAHC last year. Formerly Director of Engineering and Facilities for Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (St. Johnsbury), he had also had a 20-year career in manufacturing and construction.

He joined VHES to “identify and act upon healthcare issues daily and for the future,” and NEHES, to network with larger institutions.

Dave Keelty supervises Plant Engineering, Environmental Services, Biomedical, Buildings and Grounds, Property Management, Repairs, and Maintenance. He first worked as a boiler operator, then left health care to become a plant engineer in the pharmaceutical industry. He later returned to health care and rejoined VHES and NEHES to “learn from the experts.”

VHES Engineer of the Year Helps Other Cancer Patients Cope with Illness

Vermont’s Engineer of the Year will retire this month but, unlike many Vermonters, he won’t be heading for sunnier climates. Instead, Bernard “Bud” Myers will continue his volunteer work of supporting laryngectomy patients like himself, before and after their surgery.

A member of NEHES and charter member of VHES since 1975, Bud has never held an office but can always be counted on when there’s work to be done.

His award, presented during the “excellent” Fall Seminar in Bermuda, was “pretty nice and unexpected,” he said.

“We chose Bud for his contributions during his many years in health care and his contributions to the community,” said Bob Cummings, VHES vice president and Supervisor of Construction Management Services at Fletcher Allen Health Care (Burlington). “Bud is an advocate for the Cancer Society, raising thousands of dollars every year.”

“He was chosen on his merits,” said Gordon Lewia, VHES president and Director of Plant Operations at Copley Hospital (Morrisville). “He has not only been faithful to his hospital but to the Society. He’s attended a very high percentage of the meetings and he’s worked hard.”

Bud, a Vermont native, joined FAHC (then Fanny Allen Hospital) 27 years ago and will retire as FAHC’s Lead Maintenance Worker. He reports to Dave Keelty, VHES secretary/treasurer and FAHC Director of Facilities Management and Environmental Services.

He doesn’t have time for any hobbies; instead, he is a Cancer Society board member, a volunteer who teaches young people about the dangers of smoking, and the organizer of a laryngectomy patients’ support group.

The group meets in his home, and he visits laryngectomy patients in the hospital.

Bud Myers (left) received the VHES Engineer of the Year award during Fall Seminar from Bob Cummings, VHES vice president.
Robert Lord of Parkview Hospital
Maine Engineer Is Longtime Chapter and NEHES Supporter

Robert Lord

Maine’s Member in the Spotlight has been supporting his state chapter and NEHES ever since he joined Parkview Hospital in Brunswick in 1979 as the Director of Plant Operations.

Robert Lord started his career as an electrician for heavy industry, at TRW Auto Industry and at Bath Shipyard. After five years as Chief Electrician at New England Memorial Hospital (now Boston Regional), he came to Maine and supervises the departments of Physical Plant, Security, Grounds, Safety, New Construction, Renovation, Design, and Electrical Engineering.

Percy Hanscom, a fellow engineer in 1979 and now a retired NEHES member, invited Robert to join both the Maine Healthcare Engineers Society and NEHES. He took the advice and became a very active member of both groups.

Robert has served MHES as president, vice president, and chair of various committees, including Fall Seminar. The list of his contributions to NEHES is just as long - service as president, vice president, secretary, bylaws chair, Maine state representative, and alternate representative.

Ron Vachon, MHES president and Director of Facilities for St. Andrew’s Hospital (Boothbay Harbor), said the Member in the Spotlight honor isn’t the first his colleagues have given Robert.

“He’s been supporting the Maine chapter for a long, long time, and he’s a major supporter of the NEHES functions, too. We voted him Maine Engineer of the Year in 1994 because of his commitment,” Ron said. “He’s just a real approachable, nice, easy-going type of person, good to network with. If you have questions, you can call him, because he has such a well-rounded background. He doesn’t let things bother him.”

In his spare time, Robert and his wife love to sail their boat up and down the New England Coast. They are members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and Robert is the staff officer for Aids to Navigation (PSOAN) for the Casco Bay Flotilla. The PSOAN helps the Coast Guard with the buoyage system.

The Lords also enjoy golfing, dancing, and travelling.

36th Annual ASHE Conference Heads East to Philadelphia in 1999

By Jack Gosselin

ASHE Region 1 Representative

As I begin my second term as a board member of ASHE, a few thoughts come to mind. First, I do appreciate the opportunity to serve on the board of a national organization and have found the experience to be very rewarding. We are employed in a dynamic industry and our profession has become an integral part of this change. I have heard from many members of our region seeking resources to enact changes within their organizations. ASHE will continue to be an advocate for its members as well as providing timely information needed to stay current in our areas of accountability.

36th Annual Conference

This will be held in Philadelphia June 21-25, 1999. As the Conference comes east, it will provide all members of our region an opportunity to experience the offerings of a national conference. Please mark your calendars.

New York Engineers


ASHEnet

A substantial upgrade to ASHE’s web site was rolled out this past summer. The site can be found at www.ashe.org and is free to all ASHE members. Among the new items is a chapter site map with direct links to local ASHE chapters where available. The popularity of the web site has been demonstrated by an average number of page hits of over 66,000, up from 15,000 one year ago.

Fall Conference continued from page 1

(Bennington), (802) 447-5121.

-Events/Location: Peter Irving, Equipment Maintenance Leader, FAHC, (802) 656-3691.

-Spouse Program: Theron Manning, Director of Plant Operations, Gifford Medical Center (Randolph), (802) 728-4441, assisted by spouses of NEHES members.

-Vendors: Dave Keilty, Director of Facilities Management and Environmental Services, FAHC, (802) 656-2756; Brian Sallisky, Project Coordinator, SVMC, (802) 447-5121; Norm Welch, Director of Engineering, Springfield Hospital (Springfield), (802) 885-2151; and Don Harvey, Assistant Director of Engineering, SVMC, (802) 447-5121.

The Conference’s theme, not yet finalized, will have “something to do with the new millennium in health care and autumn in Vermont,” Bob said. The planners are finalizing a speakers’ list, which will include “one major surprise,” he added.

In addition to a first-rate educational program of concern to all members, the Vermont chapter has already booked a sunset dinner cruise on the Spirit of Ethan Allen, a 500-passenger day cruise ship sailing on Lake Champlain. The lake, located between Vermont and New York, is the country’s sixth largest freshwater lake behind the Great Lakes.

Fall Conference comes at the height of foliage season, with scheduled craft fairs, tours, special events, apple festivals, foliage trips, church suppers, antique shows, flea markets, and more.

The Conference’s location within an hour of restaurants, historic sites, bike and hiking trails, lakes, rivers, and ski areas also offers opportunities for fishing, walking, ski area gondola rides, kayaking, and canoeing.

To receive a tourist package, look at the Chamber of Commerce web site, www.vermont.org, or call the Chamber, (802) 863-3489, to receive free tourist information.

Watch future NEHES newsletters for more information about the Conference.
JCAHO Wants Facilities to Pay Attention to These Problem Areas

By Robert J. Thompson,
PE NEHES/JCAHO Liaison and Fire Protection and Safety Engineer, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Bedford, MA

In a recent conversation Dean Samet, Associate Director, Department of Standards at JCAHO, discussed some issues that are causing real problems with recent surveys.

Meet Improvement Plans

Mr. Samet reiterated the importance of maintaining Statements of Conditions (SOC) and meeting planned completion dates in Plans for Improvement (PFI). The rate of Type I deficiencies leading to Conditional Accreditation is extremely high. He feels that many in Facility Management simply are putting the SOC on the shelf and forgetting the commitments included in the PFI part of the document—a serious mistake. Any slippages over six months must have sound explanations behind them and must be reported to and approved by JCAHO.

The JCAHO, however, is providing some flexibility for facilities that do not meet their PFI schedules. JCAHO will be focusing in on whether you have met the schedule in your PFI for correction of deficiencies.

If you do not go beyond six months of your reported completion date, you do not have to report it to JCAHO nor will your facility be cited.

Any request for an extension beyond six months must be in writing to JCAHO. They will approve a time extension if there is a very good reason why the original scheduled completion date was missed. If you have specific questions, please contact JCAHO.

Facility Drills...

Fire drills continue to be required at Ambulatory Care facilities at the rate of one drill per shift per quarter. Two emergency preparedness drills are required at these facilities as well.

There has been considerable negotiation among JCAHO and other organizations on this issue for more than a year. It is anticipated that required fire drills will be reduced to one per year, hopefully by January 1, 1999, and that only one emergency preparedness drill per year will be required for Ambulatory Care facilities.

Pending final action and official notice by JCAHO, the more frequent requirements are to be enforced by JCAHO surveyors. Mr. Samet reports.

Don't Neglect Chapter 33

Mr. Samet advises those responsible for Life Safety Management to "open up the Life Safety Code, look at Chapter 33, and apply it." The requirements found in this chapter covering "Referenced Publications" are believed to be more than equal the number of requirements found in the body of the Life Safety code itself.

Nearly 50 NFPA standards and 11 "other publications" contain many provisions which are "mandatory requirements" for compliance with NFPA's Life Safety Code. Yet, Mr. Samet implied, life safety managers in many facilities fail to recognize the significance of the referenced requirements. Compliance with these requirements is necessary to meet the Code.

Should You Fight Unfair JCAHO Citations?

Contributed by Robert J. Thompson, PE

"Inside the Joint Commission" (May 18, 1998) suggests you should fight back if you think a surveyor is unfairly assessing your hospital.

Leaders of a 150-bed New England hospital challenged a surveyor's ruling that Interim Life Safety Measures (E.C.1.1, p.EC-8, '98 CAMH, Scoring 1-5, no caps) had to be adopted during all significant construction projects. Their persistence saved them "at least a Type I, maybe conditional accreditation," says one hospital leader.

According to JIC, there was good reason for the dispute. Prior to construction, hospital leaders implemented strategies to isolate work sites from the rest of the hospital. Walls and a dedicated passageway were two main approaches they used to separate work areas from the hospital space. Safety officers used a construction project checklist to ensure safety, and daily safety/construction meetings updated key players about new developments in time for extra training.

But the surveyor wouldn't budge from his position.

To resolve the situation, a hospital executive's phone call to JCAHO staff made the difference.

After speaking with the hospital leaders and the surveyor, the JCAHO official struck a compromise. The hospital's precautions were accepted as sufficient, and the surveyor didn't penalize them for their actions. But the JCAHO headquarters staff also instructed the surveyor to highlight his concerns on the hospital's report so standards officials could review them.

The outcome: No EC Type I citation was levied.

Web Site Update

www.nehes.org

Steve Cutter, NEHES Education Chair and creator of the NEHES web site, announces two additions to the site:

"CHES (Connecticut Healthcare Engineers Society) now has meeting and board member information on the site. Go to State News. I will work with any state chapter to get its information posted.

'I have added a new "Education" section that is growing - check it out soon!" Remember, this is YOUR website - I'm always looking for ideas and suggestions."

Contact Steve, Energy Engineer, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (Keene, NH) by phone, (603) 650-7148, by fax, (603) 650-8978, or by email, steven.d.cutter@hitchcock.org.
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Congratulations to Our New Officers!

New NEHES officers are Mark English, Director of Engineering, Hartford (CT) Hospital, president; Robert Loranger, Director of Facilities, New England Medical Center (Boston), president-elect; Richard Harris, Director of Facilities, Cheshire Medical Center (Keene, NH), continuing as treasurer; and Richard Malmstrom, Plant Engineer, Boston (MA) Medical Center, secretary.

A complete list of all NEHES board members will be printed in the next newsletter.

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Important Dates
March 30, 1999
Spring Seminar
Leominster, MA

June 21-25, 1999 ASHE
Annual Conference
Philadelphia

October 4 - October 8,
1999 Fall Conference
South Burlington, VT

Opening of New Wings at Maine Medical Attracts Largest Chapter Attendance

Contributed by Ron Vachon

Like most NEHES members, Maine engineers enjoy travelling to each others' facilities for meetings - it's always interesting to see what other members are doing.

In September, however, they had two special incentives to visit Maine Medical Center in Portland - the opening of a new 26,000 square feet pavilion and of a children's hospital named for Barbara Bush, wife of the former president. The Bush family has a summer home in Maine.

The addition brings MMC's total area to 1.6 million square feet, making it Maine's largest public hospital, said Ron Vachon, Maine Healthcare Engineers Society president and Director of Facilities, St. Andrew's Hospital (Boothbay Harbor).

"We believe this was the largest attendance ever at a Maine chapter meeting," he said of the 32 members who wanted to tour the new wings.

Roger Boyington, MMC Assistant Director of Engineering and chapter meeting host, thought 30 chairs would be enough, but "engineers kept arriving," he said.

The Marshall L. and Susan Gibson Pavilion is an inpatient facility for the care of adult cancer patients, and the inpatient unit of the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital is the only such facility in Maine.