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**Demand Still Smokin’ for Fire Protection Engineers**

*Despite Downturn in Global Economy, Many Employers are finding it Difficult to Recruit Qualified Fire Protection Engineers*

**BETHESDA, MD** – May 29, 2009 – One profession has been left virtually unscathed by the current economic slowdown: fire protection engineering.

Using science and technology, fire protection engineers analyze how buildings are used, how fires start, how fire grows, and how fire and smoke affect people, buildings and property. They apply their considerable skills with the aim of protecting people, property, businesses and the environment from the ravaging effects of fire.

For the past decade, the demand for fire protection engineers has outpaced the number of people qualified to fill the positions. Even with an average starting salary of $55,000 and an industry-wide mean of $98,000, knowledgeable fire protection engineers are hard to come by.

A recent survey by the Bethesda, MD-based Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE) of the largest employers of fire protection engineers found that although the current economic downturn has influenced employer’s decisions to hire additional engineers, the majority of employers who have tried to hire a qualified fire protection engineer over the past year have experienced difficulties. The majority of these same employers forecast continuing recruitment problems in the next 12 months and beyond.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents cited that they had difficulty finding candidates because there were not enough applicants in their geographic area.

“Fire protection engineering jobs are available over a wide range of industries,” said SFPE Engineering Program Manager Chris Jelenewicz. “These industries include private consulting firms, large corporations, fire departments, local building code officials, insurance firms, federal, state and local government agencies and architectural and design firms.”

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Besides the difficulties faced by employers who are recruiting fire protection engineers, the colleges and universities that offer fire protection engineering programs indicate graduating students are getting many job offers.

“In spite of the economic conditions, the market for students graduating with a Bachelor of Science Degree in fire protection engineering is still extremely favorable,” said Marino di Marzo Chair of the Fire Protection Engineering Department at the University of Maryland, College Park. “Some of our graduates this spring have multiple offers.”

To combat the labor shortage and increase the number of people entering the profession, SFPE has a strategic goal of increasing the workforce by reaching high school and college students nationwide.

For example, the SFPE has a website (www.careersinfireprotectionengineering.com) that offers students the chance to explore different career paths within the fire protection engineering profession, learn about the best way to enter the field, and discover the benefits of working in an industry where they can make a real difference.

In addition, SFPE offers a free Guide to Careers in Fire Protection Engineering. A free copy of this guide can be obtained by contacting chris@sfpe.org.

“It’s our hope we can reach students early and show them that fire protection engineering can be both a challenging and rewarding career,” says Jelenewicz. “It’s imperative for the safety of our society to train a new generation of fire protection engineers. These are the people who are going to help ensure the safety of our communities and the environment in the years to come.”

What is a Fire Protection Engineer?

According to the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, a fire protection engineer applies science and engineering principles to protect people, homes, workplaces, the economy and the environment from the devastating effects of fires. Fire protection engineers analyze how buildings are used, how fires start and grow, and how fires affect people and property. They use the latest technologies to design systems to control fires, alert people to danger, and provide means for escape. Fire protection engineers also work closely with other professionals, including engineers of other disciplines, architects, state and local building officials, and local fire departments to build fire safe communities. Fire protection engineers are in high demand. The number of available jobs far exceeds the supply.

About Society of Fire Protection Engineers

Organized in 1950, the Society of Fire Protection Engineers is the professional society for engineers involved in the field of fire protection engineering. The purposes of SFPE are to advance the science and practice of fire protection engineering, maintain a high ethical standing among its members and foster fire protection engineering education. SFPE’s worldwide members include engineers in private practice, in industry and in local, regional and national government. Chapters are located in Canada, China, France, Italy, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden and the United States.