



**National Society of
Professional Engineers®**

July 9, 2010

Charles F. Bolden Jr., Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E St. SW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Bolden,

The National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) is a professional engineering organization representing the interests of approximately 400,000 licensed professional engineers practicing in the United States and abroad, who work in industry, government, education, construction, and private practice for the protection of the public health and safety.

NSPE was recently advised that NASA (and possibly other federal agencies) are currently using the phrase "Professional Engineering Positions" to recruit nonlicensed individuals (e.g., engineering graduates) for engineering positions within the federal government.

Please be advised that the term "professional engineer" has a longstanding and well-established legal meaning. Under every state and territorial law, the term "professional engineer" means "licensed engineer." To become a "professional engineer," an individual must (1) earn a four-year accredited engineering degree, (2) obtain four years of acceptable engineering experience (as determined by a state licensing board), (3) successfully complete an eight-hour examination in the Fundamentals of Engineering (4) successfully complete an eight hour examination covering the principles and practice of engineering, and (5) meet annual mandatory state continuing education requirements. Every U.S. state and U.S. territory restricts the title "professional engineer" to those who are licensed under state law so that the public is not misled or deceived. States and territories can and do prosecute unlicensed individuals for improperly holding themselves out as professional engineers.

NSPE believes that the use of term "Professional Engineering Positions" within the federal government to include unlicensed graduate engineers is both misleading and deceptive to the public and will greatly contribute to confusion over engineering titles both inside and outside of the federal government. NSPE hereby request that NASA develop an alternative phrase that does not contribute to this confusion.

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In passing, NSPE would observe that in light of the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. Department of the Interior recently issued a directive requiring the certification of a "professional engineer" before an oil lessee or operating company begins any new drilling operation or related activity. Clearly, the Department of the Interior recognizes the important role licensed professional engineers play in protecting the public health and safety and has used the term "professional engineer" properly to describe "licensed engineers" (and not engineering graduates). NASA's current position stands in direct contrast to the Department of the Interior directive and, as stated earlier, will only increase confusion both inside and outside of the federal government regarding the proper roles, responsibilities, and titles of individuals performing critical engineering functions for the protection of the public.

Thank you for your attention in this matter, and NSPE stands ready to work with NASA and other federal agencies to address this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel W. Grossman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Samuel W. Grossman, P.E., F.NSPE
President

cc: Peter Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President
John Berry, Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management
NSPE Board of Directors