

NSPE Position Statement No. 07-167—Accident Reconstruction

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NSPE Contact: Committee on Policy and Advocacy

Professional Policy Supported: 07-Government

It is the policy of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) to support all efforts to improve forensic investigations, analysis and reporting, including depositional or court testimony when necessary, related to accidents involving property damage, bodily injury, or loss of life. Professional engineering services that are provided when such accidents occur in the highway environment are sometimes called “Accident Reconstruction” services.

To better serve the public interest, NSPE supports the improved training of police officers and other individuals who provide field observations, take measurements and photographs, and gather and preserve evidence, all of which are needed in support of engineering and other analysis during the legal process. However, such training of police officers and other individuals does not constitute engineering education or experience and does not qualify police officers and others to perform engineering services. A professional engineer brings into the Accident Reconstruction other skills, experience, and competency that a non-engineer lacks. “Accident Reconstructionist” certification programs that are offered by private organizations to police officers and other individuals who do not possess the necessary engineering education or experience do not serve the public interest.

Federal, state and local courts, as well as others involved in the legal process, should view with great caution efforts by such private groups to promote acceptance of “Accident Reconstructionist” certification titles as evidence of expert qualification. NSPE opposes efforts by “Accident Reconstructionist” certification organizations to establish by legislation or government regulation such certifications as a minimum requirement for any accident investigation or analysis. Such efforts, if successful, would constitute an unwarranted restriction upon the practice of engineering.

NSPE supports efforts by the National Academy of Forensic Engineers (NAFE) and other engineering organizations to oppose any restrictions on the practice of engineering.