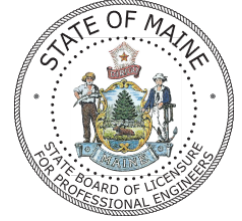




Maine PE News



STATE BOARD OF LICENSURE FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

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NCEES Updates

Brent Bridges, PE, Board Chair

The NCEES Northeastern/Central Zone Joint Interim Meeting was held from May 14th through May 16th. Attendees from numerous states convened to discuss topics impacting the processes, the policies, and the practices associated with professional engineering. Below is a list of key issues that were addressed:

- States are facing challenges with prohibited use of stamps, which is becoming more common as stamps are being stolen and are being used without authorization.
- Conducting building conditional assessments (BCAs) does not require a PE stamp, and there is ongoing evaluation as to whether stamps should be mandatory in these situations.
- Structural PE exams have become more costly and more time-intensive, now spanning four (4) days for completion. There has also been a drastic reduction in the percentage of those passing compared to previous administrations. NCEES has implemented changes to respond to these trends, and it will continue to make adjustments as needed. Structural exams transitioned to an electronic format in 2024, and some concerns are still arising as a result.
- While Maine's board consists solely of professional engineers, many state boards combine engineers, surveyors, architects, landscape architects, and interior designers, with participation ranging from 12 to 30 members. Although this type of structure encourages broader perspective, it involves different dynamics relative to contribution and deliberation.
- NCEES is considering reducing the scope of work records required per application to focus on more current activity, making it easier to provide references for relevant experience.
- A recent case was mentioned regarding an unregistered engineer who has been operating under the industrial exemption. The engineer started their own private practice, and they argued that a PE license should not be required because their performance of design work had not changed.

Since the regional conference, NCEES has confirmed that FE and PE exam volumes have increased "significantly through this point in the fiscal year." As reported, "based on current trends, NCEES is likely to administer more than 100,000 annual exams for the first time." More information will be available during the NCEES Annual Meeting, which is scheduled to occur August 17th through August 21st.

Please feel encouraged to contact our Board staff (professional.engineers@maine.gov) or NCEES ([Contact | NCEES](#)) directly with any questions about licensure.

Why Women Are Leaving Engineering: The 455,000 Stories Behind the Headline

Kim Powers, PE, Board Vice Chair

It was a late fall morning in 2025. I was enjoying a cup of coffee after getting my kids off to school, doom-scrolling Instagram—as one does—when I came across a Forbes article titled, “Women Exiting Workforce at Record Pace.”

The first sentence stopped me cold:

“455,000 women left the U.S. workforce from January to August 2025.”

It’s a striking statistic that should concern all of us—particularly in fields like engineering, where the number of professionals is already steadily declining.

My stomach dropped. At that moment, it had only been a few weeks since I had made the difficult decision to walk away from my 20-year career as an engineer. I was still processing the fallout and trying to figure out what my life and career would look like next. In some small way, it was comforting to know I wasn’t alone.

The reality is, I knew that behind that headline there were 455,000 personal stories just like mine—stories people rarely talk about openly.

Throughout my years as a working mother, I experienced both support and misunderstanding. Some managers—both men and women—were empathetic and flexible. Others simply didn’t understand. A few were extraordinarily supportive during some of life’s hardest moments: illness, loss of parents, and the daily unpredictability of raising children.

But even with support, the weight of motherhood was always there.

The need for flexibility. The scramble when kids were home sick. The impossible balancing act that intensified during COVID. Like so many working mothers, I tried to hold everything together. I coordinated playdates and birthday RSVPs, coached sports, organized school events, shuttled kids between activities, handled midday pickups after playground injuries while on work calls, ate countless lunches and dinners at my desk, and sacrificed sleep to answer late-night emails.

At the same time, I was trying to care for myself, protect my health, nurture my family, and succeed professionally.

Every day, I chased the idea that I could “have it all,” while quietly fearing that someday it might all come crashing down.

Eventually, it did.

For me, leaving the workforce was not some graceful swan song. There was no cake, no thank-you card, no celebration of two decades of hard work. My departure was the messy collision between

the kind of mother I wanted to be and the rigid expectations, metrics, and unwritten rules of organizations I had worked tirelessly for.

The breaking point came when a female manager told me, “You really need to go part-time because you’re just so scattered and unfocused.”

She went on to describe a seminar she attended suggesting women leave the workforce when their children are at “key ages,” implying that my children were at those ages. It was not a supportive message.

That conversation marked the beginning of the end.

After that, everything seemed to become a problem. I was criticized for not being on camera during meetings—even if I was picking up an injured child. My PTO was scrutinized. I was accused of leaving at 2:30 every day. Projects and meetings were dissected for mistakes, sometimes referencing things from months earlier. At one point, I was even criticized for hugging my 5-year-old daughter during an internal call before she got on the bus.

There was no constructive feedback. No assumption of positive intent. No meaningful support.

Only judgment.

And most painfully, much of that criticism centered around the very realities of motherhood I had spent years trying so hard to balance.

I knew I showed up every day with integrity and good intentions. I worked diligently and honestly to meet expectations. Yet this became the most humiliating and degrading experience of my professional life.

My husband urged me to resign, and I’m deeply grateful he did. Without that support, I likely would have stayed far longer, trying to make an impossible situation work because, like many engineers, so much of my identity was tied to my career.

In the months that followed, I focused on my children and my community. I attended every school event and every game with a level of presence I hadn’t experienced in years. I signed up to coach, volunteer, and support the local running community. I helped direct two local races and contributed to fundraising efforts for nonprofits.

There was something profoundly healing about helping others while I was struggling myself.

The Forbes article noted that “42% of women who quit voluntarily cited childcare costs and caregiving responsibilities as the driving factor. More than a third of those women said their employers offered no schedule flexibility at all.”

On paper, that’s probably how I would have described my own departure: caregiving responsibilities and a lack of flexibility.

But those phrases feel sanitized compared to the lived reality.

Behind those statistics are stories of women feeling judged, diminished, unsupported, and pushed beyond their limits—women who ultimately leave not because they lack dedication, but because they are trying to preserve their well-being and support their families in the way they believe is right.

Ironically, during my sabbatical, I connected with more engineers and professionals than ever before. I met engineer dads on my kids' sports teams, architects in my community, and professionals through running and volunteer work.

Then something unexpected happened.

Former colleagues reached out. Friends and family opened doors. Conversations during the holidays turned into opportunities—both within engineering and beyond. My village showed up in ways I never anticipated.

These were people who knew me beyond the label of a “scattered” working mom. They saw my work ethic, my values, my leadership, and my humanity.

Today, I'm back working—this time on my own terms. I found an opportunity aligned with both my professional goals and my personal values.

So what kept me in engineering? And what can we do about this troubling trend?

I believe the answer lies in relationships, community, and culture.

Bad management exists everywhere. Metrics matter, but people are not metrics. Organizations that truly support employees as human beings—not simply as outputs—will retain talented professionals who might otherwise leave.

But beyond organizational change, I've learned the importance of building meaningful relationships, leaning on friends and family, and trusting your own instincts when something feels wrong.

What matters most to me now is living a positive, meaningful life while contributing to work I believe in. I chose to move away from judgment and negativity and toward the people and values that matter most.

In doing so, I found connection, opportunity, and fulfillment again—both personally and professionally.

MAY 2026 Public Engagement

Board staff attended both the 11th Annual Matthew R. Simmons Windstorm Challenge and the 26th Annual Francis Crowe Society Induction Ceremony during May 2026. The Windstorm Challenge offered an extraordinary reminder of the ingenuity, creativity, and talent present among youth, as it required teams of middle school and high school students to “engage in a hands-on experience that combines engineering, team work, and a commitment to Maine’s technological future.” ([University of Maine, n.d.](#)). Relatedly, the Francis Crowe Society Induction Ceremony celebrated the accomplishments of both established engineers and anticipated engineering graduates. The Board would like to extend its sincerest congratulations and gratitude to the honorees and participants of both events. Indeed, your work is inspiring!



Current Board

Board Staff Contact Details

Phone: 207-287-3236
Address: 92 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0092
Email: professional.engineers@maine.gov
Supervisor of Licensing: Mary E. Hansen
Executive Director: Christine M. Wojdyla
Please feel welcome to connect with us regarding any questions, needs, or interests pertaining to licensure, outreach, or other Board activities.

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3	William Pulver, PE	Member
4	Jude Pearse, PE	Member
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6	Robert Dorko, PE	Member
7	VACANT	Public Member