



# NCEES

*advancing licensure for  
engineers and surveyors*

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## NEWS RELEASE

May 3, 2012

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## New developments in aftermath of Deepwater Horizon disaster emphasize role of licensure in ethical engineering practice

With the arrest of former BP engineer Kurt Mix putting the Deepwater Horizon disaster back in the headlines, it is important to remember the vital role that the licensing of engineers plays in protecting the American public, not just from technical incompetence but also from unethical practices.

Mix was arrested on April 24 on charges of obstruction of justice. He is accused of intentionally destroying electronic records related to the response to the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, which killed 11 and led to the largest oil spill in U.S. history. The first individual to face criminal charges following the disaster, Mix is accused of deleting hundreds of text messages, including some concerning the amount of oil potentially flowing into the Gulf of Mexico following the Macondo well explosions. While Mix should be afforded the presumption of innocence that any accused person is entitled to under our legal system, the allegations surrounding his arrest present an opportunity for sober judgment about the public's interest in the practice of engineering.

Most of the media reports about Mix are referring to him as an engineer. Individuals such as Mix practice engineering in the private sector every day without a license under licensure exemptions. While state laws may not always require a license, NCEES is committed to advancing licensure for engineers to better protect the public from incompetent or unethical practice.

Professional engineers are licensed at the state level; they must meet education and experience requirements in addition to passing a standardized examination program. To maintain a license, a P.E. must adhere to a strict code of conduct, with the primary charge being to practice the profession in a manner that protects the health, safety, and welfare of the public. A professional engineer who violates this obligation is subject to losing his or her license.

In a statement released in June 2010 during efforts to stop the flow of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, NCEES leadership highlighted the role of engineering licensure in protecting the public from incompetent or unethical practice. The latest developments in the Deepwater Horizon disaster call attention to the importance of ensuring that business activities do not sacrifice the well-being of our nation's citizens. It is a mission to which NCEES and its member licensing boards remain firmly committed.

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## **ABOUT NCEES**

*NCEES is a national nonprofit organization composed of engineering and surveying licensing boards representing all U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. An accredited standards developer with the American National Standards Institute, NCEES develops, scores, and administers the examinations used for engineering and surveying licensure throughout the United States. NCEES also provides services facilitating professional mobility for licensed engineers and surveyors. Its headquarters is located in Clemson, S.C.*