Decoupling engineering experience and the PE Exam: Is it right for Nebraska?

Jon Wilbeck & Molly Mayhew
Executive Director/Public Information Officer

In 2005, Nevada became the first state to “decouple” engineering experience from the eligibility to sit for the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) Principles and Practice of Engineering (PE) Exam.

Fast forward to today and 16 states have followed Nevada’s path. Several other states are also considering decoupling, as Nebraska did in 2014.

THE CURRENT PROCESS

Right now, applicants seeking their first professional engineer license in Nebraska must meet specific education, examination, and experience requirements. Candidates must have either graduated from a program accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET or meet the NCEES Education Standard, pass both the NCEES Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) and PE Examinations, and obtain four years of progressive engineering experience acceptable to the Board.

The board often refers to the education, examination, and experience provisions as the “three-legged stool” supporting and justifying the professional engineer license. To sit for the PE Exam, a candidate must first obtain the degree, pass the FE Exam and gain four years of experience.

If Nebraska were to decouple, the requirements for licensure would remain the same, but the order in which the requirements must be accomplished would change. Put simply, candidates could sit for the PE exam without first gaining four years of progressive engineering experience but, would not be eligible for licensure until the required experience is attained.

THE HISTORY

In August 2012, NCEES President Gene Dinkins, P.E., formed a committee to research the effects of decoupling. The committee found that decoupling posed no threat to the qualifications of a professional engineer, and unanimously agreed that NCEES should incorporate decoupling into Model Law—NCEES’ set of model regulations design to assist licensing boards in preparing legislation.

The motion passed at the 2013 NCEES Annual Meeting with little objection from member boards. In July of that same year, the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) publicly supported early testing for candidates as embodied in NSPE Position Statement No. 1778:

“Licensing boards and governing jurisdictions are encouraged to adopt the option of taking the Principles and Practice of Engineering exam as soon as an applicant for licensure believes they are prepared to take the exam.”

Utilizing this momentum, the Nebraska Board supported LB665, which was introduced into the Nebraska Legislature in 2014. LB665 would have allowed P.E. candidates to apply to the Board to take the PE Exam before an individual’s experience requirement is fulfilled will not compromise the integrity of the license or the health, safety and welfare of Nebraska.

See DECOUPLING, Page 2
take the PE Exam after graduation. However, provisions were also maintained in LB665 that those candidates would not be able to be licensed until they had also gained four years of engineering experience.

Ultimately, the decoupling provisions were not added to the Nebraska Engineers and Architects Regulation Act, but LB665’s defeat has not kept the Board away from following the progress of other states, analyzing new data and listening to licensees input on the matter.

OTHER STATES

Out of the 16 states that are decoupled, 13 allow candidates to take the PE Exam any time after passing the FE Exam, pending review of any other pertinent state requirements such as having a degree from an accredited program and being of good moral character. California and New Mexico require two years of engineering experience, and Arizona allows candidates to sit for the exam after gaining a combined 60 months of education and experience.

Early pass rates were collected for examinees testing with three or less years’ experience and ‘4+ year’ pass rates were collected for those who had completed the traditional experience requirement. From 2005 to 2012, the Board found no statistically significant data that proved favor for either testing method. Out of the 1,030 candidates who participated in the early testing, 50% successfully passed the exam. Out of the 430 ‘4+ year’ candidates, 51% successfully passed the exam.

A breakdown of the largest engineering discipline, civil engineering, showed that among the 807 candidates, early pass rates were 50% compared to 46% of candidates with four or more years of experience. Nevada also found that most candidates do not take the exam immediately after graduation, but usually chose to wait two years or more.

THE BENEFITS

The PE Exam is often referred to as “the last hurdle” in becoming licensed. By placing a four-year time stamp on the exam, candidates for licensure have to plan their lives around a testing date instead of getting rid of that “last hurdle” when it is convenient.

If a young engineer’s career is impacted by life events, such as starting a family, decoupled licensing provisions would allow for flexibility and lead to a greater chance of taking and passing the exam. If afforded the flexibility to work the PE Exam’s timing into their career plans, instead of the exam timing dictating their career, this will ultimately benefit that engineer and the engineering profession.

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**FURTHER READING**

- **NSPE Position Statement No. 1778, adopted January 2017**
  https://www.nspe.org/resources/issues-and-advocacy/position-statements/professional-practice

- **“A Matter of Timing”, National Society of Professional Engineers, December 2013**
  https://www.nspe.org/resources/pe-magazine/december-2013/matter-timing
Candidates ready to take the PE Exam will not lose interest because of waiting until their experience is fulfilled, especially if that experience is in an area not tested by the PE Exam.

More individuals working in exempt industries will likely become licensed as well. Taking an exam long after their graduation can be daunting. Again, a greater number of licensed professional engineers would result from decoupling.

THE CONCERNS

Opponents of decoupling may assert that a person licensed in Nebraska after taking the exam early would find it difficult or even impossible to be licensed in a state that does not allow this provision. There are a couple of considerations to this argument.

First, it is important to understand this provision is optional. Those who have a concern about licensure by comity in other states may choose to meet the four year experience requirement before taking the PE Exam as currently required.

Secondly, during the PE Exam application process, the Board would point out to each and every PE Exam candidate the comity and mobility considerations that may arise due to PE Exam passage prior to gaining four years of engineering experience.

Another common position from licensees is that they “had to wait” four years after graduation before taking the PE Exam when they became licensed professional engineers. The Board acknowledges that change sometimes doesn’t happen quickly.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Decoupling is a topic on the forefront of the Board. The Board believes that taking the PE exam before an individual’s experience requirement is fulfilled will not compromise the integrity of the license or the health, safety and welfare of Nebraska citizens in any way.

Adding a decoupling provision to the E&A Regulation Act will result in more professional engineers becoming licensed, and thereby result in greater protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

The Board is interested in hearing your thoughts and concerns about decoupling engineering experience from the PE exam. If you would like to provide feedback, or have questions about decoupling, please email us at nbea.office@nebraska.gov or call our office at 402-471-2021.

New architect, professional engineer and public member join board

Molly Mayhew
Public Information Officer

Recently appointed by Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, architect Brian Kelly, professional engineer Dan Thiele, and public member Brett Foley are the newest members of the Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects.

Brian Kelly, who has worked at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for almost a decade, was appointed to the Board in January and represents the UNL College of Architecture on the Board. Prior to joining the college, he was an assistant professor at California Polytechnic State University and at Missouri’s Drury University.

Kelly has been recognized by both the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the University of Nebraska for his design work. Kelly is a graduate of UNL with a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Studies and a Master of Architecture. He is president of the Professional Engineers’ Education Coalition as well as the Nebraska Society of Professional Engineers’ Education Foundation.

“Each place offers new insights and enriches the ways I see the role of architecture in the city. The connection between travel and education is very important and I love seeing the changes in students as they are exposed to new places internationally.”

Dan Thiele hails from Omaha and is a licensed Professional Civil Engineer with a focus on geotechnical and material engineering. Thiele holds both a Bachelor of Science and Master of Civil Engineering from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is licensed in 22 states. Thiele will bring over 30 years of engineering experience to the Board.

Originally from Nebraska, Kelly has been fortunate to travel the world to teach students about architecture.

“I have led the UNL London program two times and offer a summer program in Barcelona,” Kelly said.

He is president of the Professional Engineers Coalition as well as the Nebraska Society of Professional Engineers’ Education Foundation.

“I look forward to sharing my perspective from being licensed in multiple states,” Thiele said of joining the Board. “I’m interested in gaining a better perspective on the mechanics of the licensure process.”

Brett Foley, Ph.D., is a psychometrician from Denton, Nebraska and will be the third public member to serve on the Board since the position was created in 1998.

Originally from Rapid City, South Dakota Foley holds a Masters in Biometry and a Doctorate of Psychology Studies in Education.

See NEW MEMBERS, Page 4
New Board Officers Elected

The Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects is pleased to announce new officers for the 2018 year.

At the March meeting, the Board unanimously voted Jennifer Klein, Lenora Isom and Jan Bostelman as the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary, respectively.

Jennifer Klein, P.E.
Lenora Isom, NCARB
Jan Bostelman, P.E.

Klein, a principal electrical engineer and project manager at Clark Enersen Partners, has served with the Board since 2010. She is also a member of several societies including NSPE and serves on the Board of Directors for the Spirit of Nebraska Council of the Girl Scouts of America. This is Klein’s second consecutive year as an officer after serving as the vice-chair in 2017.

Isom, an architect who has served on the Board since 2016, works for the City of Ashland as a Building Official, Zoning and Floodplain Administrator and Economic Developer. Isom is a NCARB member and serves on several Boards. This will be Isom’s second consecutive year as an officer after serving as the secretary in 2017.

Bostelman, a professional engineer from Brainard who runs her own firm, has served on the Board since 2017. Bostelman currently serves on the Nebraska Radon Resistant New Construction Task Force and is also a Board member of the East Butler School District.

SOFTWARE PE EXAM DISCONTINUING

NCEES will discontinue The Principles and Practice of Engineering (PE) Software Engineering exam after the April 2019 administration.

As the exam has had less than 50 total first-time candidates since the exam’s inception in 2013, the Committee of Examination Policy and Procedures (EPP) is required to review the exam and provide recommendations to the NCEES board of directors about continuation.

After consideration, the EPP Committee recommended that NCEES discontinue the PE Software Engineering exam. At the February 2018 meeting, the NCEES board of directors confirmed the recommendation to discontinue the exam.

For more information on FE or PE exams, visit ncees.org/engineering.

CBT SCHEDULE RELEASED

The National Council of Examiners for Engineering Surveying (NCEES) released the tentative conversion schedule for paper exams making the switch to Computer Based Testing (CBT).

As of the first of this year, the Chemical and Nuclear exams are the latest additions to CBT. The next two exam disciplines updating to electronic will be Environmental and Petroleum. Structural is tentatively set to be the last exam to transition to CBT in 2024.

Of the 24 different PE exams, 12 will be year round, 12 will be a single-day exams offered once a year, and the Structural exam has yet to be determined.

To view the tentative exam schedule, visit ncees.org/cbt.

TESTING REGISTRATION DEADLINE

First time applicants for the PE paper-and-pencil exam have until July 27, 2018 to register for the October 26-27, 2018 exam.
Board to enhance communications with technical updates

In the coming months, the Board is looking to implement new changes to improve licensee's accounts, communication and connection.

The most considerable update for the Board staff will be a new software management system to handle licensing information for individuals and firms.

“The current management system the Board uses has limited capabilities,” Molly Mayhew, Public Information Officer for the Board, said. “The new system will enable board staff to better manage accounts and track correspondence.”

To further improve direct communication, licensees can look forward to emails containing important Board information such as renewal reminders, updates to Board rules, and the newsletter.

“Licensees will still receive a postcard in Autumn reminding them that their license is about to expire,” Mayhew said. “Excluding that one biennium reminder, individual licensees, emeritus members and firms can look forward to receiving necessary Nebraska news via email.”

With updates slated to begin this year, any licensees or emeritus members who have moved or have updated information (phone, fax or email) should contact the Board at nbea.office@nebraska.gov. A change of address/contact form is not required.

Licensees and emeritus members looking to confirm their contact information can email molly.mayhew@nebraska.gov.

“The Board intends to only deliver necessary updates and newsletters to firms, licensees and emeritus members,” Mayhew said. “As this will be a new process to the Board staff, any suggestions or input from recipients is welcomed.”

Any licensee that shows as having an invalid email will receive a postcard from the Board requesting updated contact information.

Individuals, firms, and emeritus members should mark board emails as ‘safe senders’ to ensure emails are not going to SPAM folders.

Non-licensees who wish to receive The Nebraska Professional can sign up to receive the newsletter at ea.nebraska.gov/newsletters or directly email molly.mayhew@nebraska.gov.

As a reminder, this will be the last printed version of The Nebraska Professional. Electronic notifications about newsletter availability will be sent in May and November.

The Rolling Clock will continue for all ARE participants and will not start over for those transitioning to ARE 4.0 from ARE 5.0.

Candidates not registered with the Board before November 2017 will not be eligible to take the final ARE 4.0 exam.

NCARB and the Board strongly encourages exam candidates to read the testing center rules and requirements before attending the exam. To learn more about testing center rules, visit ncarb.org/pass-are/are5/start/test-center.

SECURITY REMINDER

NCARB has seen an up-tick in candidates sharing information about the ARE exams in online community forums. Before testing, read the Candidate Agreement in the ARE guidelines to maintain exam confidentiality.

It is a violation to disclose the specifics of ARE content and candidates caught sharing confidential information can face repercussions such as suspended testing privileges and invalidation of exam scores.

Scottsbluff Fire Department no longer a delegated authority

Effective January 11, 2018 the Scottsbluff Fire Department is no longer a delegated authority of the Nebraska State Fire Marshal.

All design firms or individual licensees who have previously submitted plans for commercial construction to the Scottsbluff Fire Department for fire code review must resubmit plans directly to the Plans Division of the State Fire Marshal Agency in Lincoln.

Plan submittal only applies to fire code reviews. Building permits are not affected and will continue to be reviewed by Scottsbluff officials.

If you have questions about the change, please contact the Fire Marshal Chief Plans Examiner at 402-471-9474 or visit sfm.nebraska.gov.

NCARB NEWS

ARE 4.0 RETIRING IN JUNE

When the impending retirement of ARE 4.0, exam candidates can look forward to several changes coming to NCARB accounts.

As of July 1, candidates currently in ARE 4.0 will need to login to their NCARB account to ensure records are transition to ARE 5.0. Most candidates will automatically be transitioned and the appropriate credits and eligibilities will appear in the account.

Candidates who tested in ARE 4.0 in June 2018 will need to wait until exam scores are released before making the transition to ARE 5.0. All other candidates with special accommodations, or those having issues transitioning accounts, will need to contact NCARB support directly at 202-879-0520.

The Nebraska Professional

May 2018
Recently Resolved Compliance Cases

The following complaints were reviewed for compliance by the Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects, and resolved via the action noted. These summaries are provided for licensee education and information, and should not be interpreted as a full description of the complaints described. In complaints where disciplinary action was taken by the Board per Neb. Rev. Stat. § 81-3444, the names of the individuals and/or organizations involved are included.

Complaint #17.03
Unlicensed Practice

Summary: The Board was notified of the submission of building plans to another state agency for the construction of a one-level building [Assembly (A) occupancy] comprising 5,550 square feet that did not bear the seal of a Nebraska-licensed architect or professional engineer.

Action: This project was subject to the Act because the construction comprised more than 1,000 square feet of building area classified as Assembly occupancy under the state building code. The Board authorized the remediation process provided in Board Rule 8.4 to bring this project into compliance with the Act.

Three licensees served as the remediation professionals and conducted reviews of the project, identified deficiencies, and recommended corrections that were implemented. The complaint was dismissed with no disciplinary action.

Complaint #17.09
Unlicensed Practice

Summary: The Board was notified of the submission of building plans to another state agency for a renovation and addition to a one-level, 5,600 square foot religious worship center [Assembly (A) occupancy] that did not bear the seal of a Nebraska-licensed architect or professional engineer.

Action: This project was subject to the Act because the work impacted more than 1,000 square feet of building area classified as Assembly occupancy. Upon notice of the complaint, the project owners engaged a licensee to become involved in the project. The complaint was dismissed with no disciplinary action.

Complaint #17.16
Unlicensed Practice

Summary: The Board was notified of the submission of building plans to another state agency for the renovation of a one-level, 6,000 square foot commercial building [Business (B) or Mercantile (M) occupancies] that did not bear the seal of a Nebraska-licensed architect or professional engineer.

A licensee serving as a remediation professional conducted a review of the project, identified deficiencies, and recommended corrections that were implemented. The complaint was dismissed with no disciplinary action.

Complaint #17.22
Unlicensed Practice

Summary: The Board was notified of the submission of building plans to another state agency for the renovation of a one-level, 1,392 square foot restaurant [Assembly (A) occupancy] that did not bear the seal of a Nebraska-licensed architect or professional engineer.

Action: This project was subject to the Act because the renovation impacted 1,000 or more square feet of building area classified as Assembly occupancy. The Board authorized the remediation process provided in Board Rule 8.4 to bring this project into compliance with the Act.

A licensee serving as a remediation professional conducted a review of the project and did not identify any deficiencies. The complaint was dismissed with no disciplinary action.

Complaint #17.24
Unlicensed Practice

Summary: The Board was notified of the submission of building plans to another state agency for a one-level, 1,462 square foot addition to a religious worship center [Assembly (A) occupancy] that did not bear the seal of a Nebraska-licensed architect or professional engineer.

Action: This project was subject to the Act because the addition impacted 1,000 or more square feet of building area classified as Assembly occupancy. The Board authorized the remediation process provided in Board Rule 8.4 to bring this project into compliance with the Act.

A licensee serving as a remediation professional conducted a review of the project and did not identify any deficiencies. The complaint was dismissed with no disciplinary action.
Architects by Exam
Brandon M. Beatty Omaha NE
Benjamin J. Fiedler Omaha NE
Jennifer L. Fiedler Omaha NE
Tyson C. Fiscus Omaha NE
Eric C. Goeken Omaha NE
Ryan J. Huber Omaha NE
Matthew R. Kreutzer Grand Island NE
Carl W. Laegredt Seattle WA
Jordan N. Lake Lincoln NE
Molly E. Macklin Omaha NE
Kyle D. Miller Papillion NE
Mark C. Muller Glen Ellyn NE
Kristen M. Schulte Omaha NE
Kylie A. Von Seggern Omaha NE

Professional Engineers by Exam
Civil
Daniel R. Alexander Lincoln NE
Kortney R. Brown Ralston NE
Adam P. Christiansen Omaha NE
Brent P. Ciecior Lincoln NE
Traci J. Custard Omaha NE
John P. Diediker Lincoln NE
Nicholas D. Dobberpuhl Dallas TX
Jordan T. Dostal Omaha NE
Raeanna C. Doyle Omaha NE
Brian P. Finn Omaha NE
Skylar L. Fossberg Lincoln NE
Joshua J. Frank Omaha NE
Brandon M. Gardels Omaha NE
Michael D. Hale Lincoln NE
Brent M. Hall Lincoln NE
Kevin C. Harden La Vista NE
Kody J. Heller Norfolk NE
Derek W. Helmick Auburn NE
Aaron J. Herlihy Lincoln NE
Kevin J. Hock Omaha NE
Andric P. Hofrichter Grand Island NE
Scott M. Hrabik Syracuse NE
Nathan W. Huebner Lincoln NE
Philip A. Jackman Gretna NE
Brittney D. Kelley Elkhorn NE
John R. Kelly Fort Calhoun NE
Laura E.
Knapp Leiferman Omaha NE
Coleman D. Larsen Grand Island NE
Xavier O. Larsen Centennial CO
Torey L. McMullen Kearney NE
Garret H. Menard Omaha NE
Jonathan L. Richter Omaha NE
Landon C. Shaw North Platte NE
Ryan D. Sisk Omaha NE
Leslie J. Steele Grand Island NE
Thomas M. Thornton North Platte NE
Jordan L. Wachal Omaha NE
David W. Walker Sioux City IA
Caleb T. White Omaha NE
Maegan M. Woelf Omaha NE
Jared M. Wurtele Lincoln NE

Control Systems
Stephen C. Beck Omaha NE

Architects
Jeffrey W. Anderzhon
Paul L. Bosman
Boyd O. Bower
Erlich H. Broer
Stephen L. Clymer
Richard M. Dean
John W. Farabow Jr.
Robert P. Findley
Edward F. Gilmore
Jerry L. Glass
Terri R. Hymans
James R. Jaros
Terry L. Johnson
Joseph A. Johnson
Lynn L. Jones
Bruce A. Keller
Jack W. Kienast

Environmental
Matthew P. Pelton Omaha NE
Camilla J. Snow Omaha NE

Fire Protection
Andrew J. Blassak Logan IA
John P. Nebbia Omaha NE

Mechanical
Alireza Behfar Omaha NE
Gregory R.S. Hildner Kansas City MO
Daniel R. Hilgendorf Omaha NE
Elliot K. Hunt Omaha NE
Darren E. Ingram Omaha NE
Peter A. Larson Omaha NE
Nathan T. Mar Plattsburg NE
Ricky D. McGee Gretna NE
Mehdi Mehrabi Omaha NE
Jacob A. Petersen Omaha NE
Tylor J. Robinson Saint Libery NE
Jason D. Stigge Plattsburg NE
James W. Swerezek Omaha NE
Matthew R. Taylor Ozawie KS

Metallurgical and Materials
John J. Metzer Omaha NE

Structural
Kyle K. Kauzlarich Omaha NE
Kyle J. Kepaskey Omaha NE
Aaron J. Yake Lincoln NE

Emeritus Status
Architects
Jeffrey W. Anderzhon
Paul L. Bosman
Boyd O. Bower
Erlich H. Broer
Stephen L. Clymer
Richard M. Dean
John W. Farabow Jr.
Robert P. Findley
Edward F. Gilmore
Jerry L. Glass
Terri R. Hymans
James R. Jaros
Terry L. Johnson
Joseph A. Johnson
Lynn L. Jones
Bruce A. Keller
Jack W. Kienast

Professional Engineers
Mary J. Adolf
John R. Amend
Robert J. Amurso
Glen L. Andersen
Tore O. Arnesen
Ellen B. Barnes
Rick W. Bay
Kenneth A. Birt
Robert A. Blochel
Gary L. Bocu
James E. Boucher
John C. Branch
Robert J. Buchholz

Christopher J. Cardillo
Jaime A. Castro
Cheerei Cheng
Lawrence J. Cieslik
Richard P. Clemens
Douglas J. Clemenson
Donald C. Cox
Theodore M. Cox
Fadi N. Dahmash
Jason R. Dedrickson
John DeWit
Ebenzeer Donkoh
Glenn H. Dostal
William B. Eddy
Robert L. Ellis
Keith R. Erickson
Abraham Erlich
John N. Everett
Thomas W. Eversden
Jody S. Farhat
John J. Fluehr II
James E. Foley
James G. Govaia
Robert D. Grasso Jr.
Curtis M. Grundman
William F. Haney
Peter P. Hanik
Ralph C. Hansen
David L. Hansen
Glen H. Hansen
William A. Hansen
Kenneth L. Hartwig
Michael C. Heal
William C. Healy
Curtis R. Helfrich
John B. Herman
Steven J. Herth
Peter A. Heye
Mark A. Hillstrom
James F. Hilton
William E. Hulse
Willis D. Hunt
Nelson J. Hymans
Charles B. Jacomino
John M. Jess
William J. Jones
Sarfraz H. Kathawala
Brad M. Kauffman
Stephen W. Kent
Kevin K. Kroke
David H. Kuhn
David R. Kulisek
Timothy J. McIvor

Deceased
Architects
Steve E. Cook Jr.
Thomas L. Kaspar
David T. Littrell
Ernest O. Moore
Gary D. Watkins

Professional Engineers
Sidney J. Artt Jr.
James L. Beiker
Richard N. DeVries
William E. Hamouz

The Nebraska Professional Engineers by Exam
November 17, 2017 - May 2, 2018
The Nebraska Professional Engineers

Professional Engineers by Exam
May 2018
The Nebraska Professional Engineers

Professional Engineers by Exam
May 2018
### SITE

This fenced-in square of sand and yellow grass, five miles or more from the nearest town is the site where the County Poor Farm stood for seventy years, and here the County permitted the poor to garden, permitted them use of the County water from a hand-pump, loaned them buckets to carry it spilling over the grass to the sandy, burning furrows that drank it away—a kind of Workfare from 1900. At night, each family slept on the floor of one room in a boxy house that the County put up and permitted them use of. It stood here somewhere, door facing the road. And somewhere under this grass lie the dead in the County’s unmarked graves, each body buried with a Mason jar in which each person’s name is written on a paper. The County provided the paper and the jars.

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**Ted Kooser**, former U.S. Poet Laureate (2004-2006), and recipient of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, a Nebraska Poet. **Ted Kooser postcard sketch.** Kooser was a former Iowa State University architecture student. (1957-59). Reprinted with permission from Ted Kooser.

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>Board Meeting</th>
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<td>NCARB Annual Meeting</td>
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<td>PE Exam First Time App Deadline</td>
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<td>Board Meeting</td>
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<td>NCEES Annual Meeting</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>PE Exam Registration Deadline</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Board Meeting</td>
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<td>Board Meeting</td>
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<td>26-27</td>
<td>PE Exams - Lincoln</td>
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<td>NBEA Closed - Veteran’s Day</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22-23</td>
<td>NBEA Closed - Thanksgiving</td>
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