

Address contributions for *CHP News* and "CHP Corner" to:

Editor
Kyle Kleinhans, CHP
Work: 865-241-1024
Email: klink17@tds.net

Associate Editor
Harry Anagnostopoulos, CHP
Work: 702-295-3489
Email: H.Anagnostopoulos@NV.DOE.GOV

Professional Standards and Ethics Committee

Paul S. Rohwer, CHP, Committee Chair

The purpose of the Professional Standards and Ethics Committee is to define the Standards of Professional Responsibility for Certified Health Physicists (CHP) and to review all complaints about ethical practice referred to the committee by the Executive Committee. There were no complaints referred to the committee during the past year.

At the request of the Executive Committee, this committee provided summary documentation of its findings on the open question of what action, if any, the Academy should take when a CHP is convicted of a felony. Review of the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) Operations Documents (Preamble and Bylaws, standing committee charters, SOPs, and GGTK documents) did not identify specific guidance for dealing with applicants and diplomats who are convicted felons. The AAHP "Standards of Professional Responsibility for CHPs" are directed at how we practice our profession and have nothing specific to felonies and other non-professional transgressions. Our standards do include the following words: "The CHP shall not act in a manner that may bring the profession or the Academy into disrepute." and "The CHP shall maintain the highest standards of integrity and fairness in his/her professional interactions

with employers, colleagues, workers, clients, government agencies, and the general public." A survey of other not-for-profit organizations operating certification programs indicates that there is no predominant approach, strategy, or policy among these peers on this issue. Based on these findings it was concluded that the issue is not worthy of further investment of time and effort because such occurrences probably will be rare and, if they should occur, it was recommended that they be appropriately handled on a case-by-case basis with existing AAHP policies and procedures.

The committee is also responsible for selection of the Joyce P. Davis Memorial Award winners. This award is given in memory and honor of Joyce P. Davis in recognition of her dedication to the advancement of health physics and her humanitarian efforts to uphold the ethics of the profession. A call was issued for nominations for the 2009 Joyce P. Davis Memorial Award. Unfortunately no nominations were received and the award will not be given in 2009.

Professional Standards and Ethics Committee members, in addition to the chair, are Karen Barcal, Jack Fix, Ruth McBurney, and Cheryl Olson.

Answers to Questions Regarding Eligibility for the ABHP Exam

Cheryl Olson, CHP, ABHP Chair

This spring, a few applicants for the Part I exam were rejected because they did not meet the educational or professional-level experience requirements. Three of these applicants requested clarification of the Board's decision. Two of the cases dealt with educational requirements not being met, whereas the third case dealt with an inadequate number of years of professional-level experience. While the minimum educational requirements are explicitly stated in the current Board procedures, what constitutes professional experience is intentionally not specifically addressed. Determination of an applicant's experience is a judgment of the Board.

Current Board procedures require candidates for Part I to have a degree in health physics and one year of professional-level experience or a qualifying degree with at least 20 hours of physical sciences and two years of professional-level experience. At one time, in extenuating circumstances, professional-level experience was permitted to be used to meet the degree requirement if the applicant had 60 hours in physical sciences with at least 20 hours in mathematics and engineering. This was changed to bring the American Board of Health Physics (ABHP) certification requirements in line with other certifying bodies, address impending Nuclear Regulatory

Commission regulations regarding minimum requirements to hold professional radiation safety positions, and address the low exam pass rate for those candidates without degrees.

The criteria do not specify that professional experience can only be gained “post graduate,” although some certifying bodies define it as such. The Board recognizes that there are many who are working at a professional level without a qualifying degree. Conversely, otherwise academically qualified individuals may not be performing professional-level work in the jobs that they held postgraduation. The Board discussed the definition of professional-level experience at length and determined that additional guidance should be included in the prospectus so that applicants and supervisors would understand the importance of correlating job duties and descriptions to the eligibility criteria. Additional information will also be included to help applicants understand the proper appeals process.

The ABHP is committed to maintaining the integrity of the certification process and tries to be judicious in the selection of candidates who apply to sit for the examina-

tion. This year, as in past years, every application for the exam was reviewed in accordance with ABHP policy and procedure. There were no unwritten rules, but the determination of an applicant’s experience was a judgment of a member of the Board. To lessen the influence of personal bias in the process, rejected applications were reviewed by the chair of the Board and, in some cases, overturned. The Board does want to retain some flexibility to enable inclusion of all qualified applicants.

Applicants should consider the guidance in the prospectus posted on the ABHP home page and realize that the terms “internship” or “post graduate” may not reflect work requiring professional judgment. Additionally, associate-level membership in the Health Physics Society is more of a technical nature and does not reflect a professional-level stature. The ABHP is committed to maintaining the integrity of the certification process. We all started at the beginning of the certification process—with the application. We empathize with the applicants who did not qualify to take the exam this year. We encourage everyone to take the steps necessary to become eligible and to certify. 