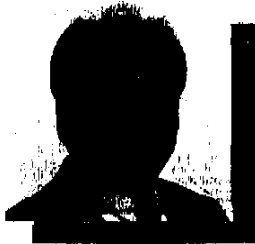


**ENGINEERS -
TURNING IDEAS
INTO REALITY**



By Keith B. Price, Jr., P.E.

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Engineer. Pause just a moment to consider what that word means to you. Not what Webster says, perhaps not what you were taught, but, maybe, how it operates in your life — or whether your thoughts yield a position, a process, or a person.

"Engineer" is a position. An engineer may perform many functions and duties — from research, analysis, design, and testing, to management, administration, and government. Engineers work everywhere — in factories, at universities, in offices, outdoors, with computer systems and calculators, and with scientific instruments. Engineers are professionals who research, design, develop, test, and implement new and improved applications, procedures, and technologies. Their primary responsibility is providing for and protecting the safety, health, and welfare of the public.

"Engineer" is an action verb which describes a process. Applying mathematics, education, and common sense, engineers design and build everyday items you see and use — such as roads, bridges, computers, cars, buildings, appliances, and airplanes.

"Engineers" are people, too — typically, the quiet thinkers and detail-oriented, problem-solving analysts in society. Stereotypically called "number-crunchers," and known as "nerds" with "pocket protectors," engineers tend to lead private lives, working away for the sense of accomplishment that comes with a job well done.

With the rest of society, engineers watch as the rapid pace of change accelerates and continues to rock our world. New marketplaces and economies skyrocket. Technologies rise and are immediately obscure. Regulatory and governmental agencies and current laws and rules are left behind by the rapid change in technology and communications. Ours is an information-based society in which decisions are made and courses charted and changed as rapidly as data can be transmitted. Futurist Alvin Toffler calls it "the rattling and shaking" — a fundamental transformation with no end in sight as world order, relationships, communities, and values are being made and remade constantly.

National Engineers Week is the last week in February. This year's theme is "Engineers — Turning Ideas Into Reality." Why should engineers be recognized during this special week? On a daily basis, engineers turn ideas into reality, affecting our lives for benefit, safety, and well-being. Engineers formulate questions and frame paradigms for technical solutions to technical situations, but engineers are also volunteers, parents, citizens, politicians, and educators. While no one individual or group has all the answers, engineers work to provide solutions and address issues which affect us all.

Society's most valuable resources are the minds and hearts of people. We can meet the challenge before us by tapping these resources to shape a world and a society which we can proudly leave behind. We must each develop our dreams, cultivate our hopes and desires, and act to make it happen. Join me in turning our ideas into reality.



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