

Licensure of Professional Geologists in New York State

The Geologic Profession

The application of geologic data is an integral part of many actions involving the public health, safety, and welfare of all residents in New York State. Professional geologists determine and apply sound geologic methods that serve to protect the public and the environment.

Current Regulatory Framework that Requires Geologic Expertise

A number of areas of Federal and New York State law call for geologic expertise which directly affects the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

Recommended Educational Requirements

Currently, Bachelors degree programs in geologic sciences are offered at 35 public and private colleges and universities in New York State. Adequate criteria for licensure would include:

- A Bachelors degree in geologic sciences combined with a minimum of 5 years experience; **AND**
- Passage of a qualifying examination.

The above criteria are generally consistent with the minimum requirements established for the 28 states that license geologists.

Adverse Effects of the Lack of Licensure in New York State

Public agencies and private companies, by law or policy, usually demand licensed professionals in contracting work. As geologists are not currently licensed in New York, they have been historically excluded from direct participation with public works projects. This exclusion has allowed individuals and entities to evaluate geologic conditions with disastrous consequences, placing an undue risk on public health, safety and welfare. Such risks include loss of life and property, higher costs of supervision, costs related to corrective action, and lower cost/benefit ratios due to inefficient work.

Conclusion

It is both sound science and sound public policy to require licensure of professional geologists in New York State. Given the on-going significance of environmental protection, the increased focus on scarcity of natural resources, and the certain geologic movements that accompany the forces of nature, geologists will be increasingly called upon to render professional opinion and expert advice that affect all New Yorkers. Rigorous licensure requirements will weed out those who practice unethically without qualification and provide the public with the assurance of a minimum level of competency and legal accountability.