With the Society

THE SOCIETY OF FIRE PROTECTION ENGINEERS

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In the fifteen years since the Society of Fire Protection Engineers was organized, its Qualifications Board, which considers all applications for membership, found that the qualifications for membership as originally established in 1950 were subject to a variety of interpretations. It became increasingly difficult for the board to apply with reasonable accuracy and consistency the requirement for the three grades of membership, i.e., Member, Associate Member, and Junior Member. From years of experience in passing on the qualifications of applicants, using the guidelines set down by the Society founders, it became increasingly clear to the board that the qualifications should be rewritten to more clearly reflect the image that the SFPE holds for its members. It was also evident that the current image of the fire protection engineer is different from that envisioned by the Society founders fifteen years ago.

This is not to say that the qualifications for membership in SFPE have not been revised since 1950. There have been revisions, but they were primarily to the qualifications for Junior Membership. Interestingly enough, the most difficult grade for which the Qualifications Board must make its decisions for recommendation for election or rejection of applicants is that of Junior Members.

REVISED QUALIFICATIONS

As a result, qualifications for membership in all grades, except Honorary Member, have been revised. The revised qualifications, prepared by a select committee made up of two past chairmen and two former members of the Qualifications Board and one member of the SFPE Executive Committee, were unanimously adopted by the SFPE at its annual meeting May 19 of this year. The qualifications, as they now read, are:

MEMBER: A Member shall be a graduate of an engineering curriculum of accepted standing and shall have completed not less than 8 years of engineering practice of progressive importance indicative of growth in engineering competency and achievement, three of which shall have been in responsible charge of fire protection engineering work, or

If not such a graduate, a Member shall have completed not less than 12 years of engineering practice of progressive importance indicative of growth in engineering competency and achievement, three of which shall have been in responsible charge of fire protection engineering work. In addition, he shall submit evidence, of a character acceptable to the Executive Committee, of a knowledge of engineering principles or shall satisfactorily complete a written examination.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER: An Associate Member shall be a graduate of an engineering curriculum of accepted standing and shall have completed not less than 4 years of engineering practice of progressive importance indicative of growth in engineering competency and achievement, three of which shall have been in responsible charge of fire protection engineering work, or

If not such a graduate, an Associate Member shall have completed not less
than 8 years of engineering practice, two of which shall have been in fire protection engineering. In addition, he shall submit evidence, of a character acceptable to the Executive Committee, of a knowledge of engineering principles or shall satisfactorily complete a written examination.

**Junior Member:** A Junior Member at the time of his admission shall be a graduate of an approved engineering curriculum and shall be actively engaged in fire protection engineering work, or

If not such a graduate, he shall be actively engaged in the study and practice of fire protection engineering under supervision of a qualified fire protection engineer and shall have been so engaged for at least four years. Junior Membership shall not be held for more than ten years. These qualifications shall not apply to Junior Members elected prior to June 3, 1959.

If these qualifications for membership are compared with those in effect prior to the annual meeting, several significant changes will be evident.

**Member and Associate Membership**

For the grades of Member and Associate Member emphasis has been placed on possession of an engineering degree. This seemed logical since in any engineering society the first criterion in considering an applicant is to determine whether or not he is an engineer. Graduation from an accepted engineering curriculum is evidence that the applicant has a knowledge of engineering fundamentals and therefore is capable of working on engineering problems.

If the applicant for Member or Associate Member grade is not a graduate of an engineering curriculum, it behooves the applicant to submit evidence that he has a knowledge of engineering principles equivalent to those attained by the graduate. This is very difficult for most applicants and it is particularly difficult to present such evidence in writing. The SFPE, therefore, offers the applicant the opportunity to prove his knowledge of engineering fundamentals by passing a written examination prepared by the Qualifications Board and administered at locations convenient to the applicant. An applicant rejected for the grade of membership for which he has applied may request of the Qualifications Board the privilege of taking such a written examination.

Deleted from the qualifications for Member grade was the requirement of practice in the “broad range” of fire protection engineering. The founders of the Society felt that members of the Society should be qualified to practice in all of the areas with which the fire protection engineer is concerned. This prevented eminently qualified engineers, who had spent their entire professional practice in one specialized phase of fire protection engineering, from attaining the grade of Member. The committee which prepared the revisions to the qualifications felt that this requirement was unreasonable. Most engineering professions have specialized fields of endeavor and other engineering societies do not penalize their members because they are specialists. The current trend in engineering appears to warrant more specialization as engineering problems become more complex.

Added to the qualifications for the grade of Member is the phrase, “engineering practice of progressive importance, indicative of growth in engineering competency and achievement.” While this may appear to be a catchall phrase subject to wide and varied interpretation, it is not the intent that it should be so. The intent simply is to require the applicant to produce evidence that he has, in fact, grown in his engineering competency and that he is handling more intricate engineering problems. Such growth is generally reflected in the applicants professional experience record. It is not necessarily indicated by the applicants successive promotions within his company, which