

# Asking Directions

J. Joe Scott II, CPD

On a recent vacation, I drove to various parts of the Midwest. We did the family reunion thing and ended up on the shores of Lake Michigan. On several occasions, I was relatively sure, but not exactly sure, of where I was going. Lisa would ask if I was lost, to which I would reply, "Of course not." Lisa would then suggest that I stop and ask for directions. Stop and ask for directions?

Certainly not. I kind of knew where I was going and was not ready to admit that I could be going in the wrong direction. Lisa, on the other hand, would have stopped and had a 10-minute conversation with anyone on the street. We would have made it to our destination in approximately the same time, or maybe a little faster. In truth, we could have made it to our destination a lot faster had I stopped and asked.

The same can be said of many of us when we design our systems. We need to take the time to ask questions. By doing so, we can be more efficient with our time and knowledge. The benefit of sharing information is a lesson many of us learned a long time ago. When you have a project in a geographic area far from your office, calling a local designer to get some information about local code conditions and interpretations can

save quite a bit of time and money in the long run.

If you ask about a topic like elevator sump pumps and oil interceptors, it seems like you get a different answer, no matter where your project is located. I am amazed at how many different ways such a simple piece of equipment can be applied (or misapplied). Some places require a pump, others only a pit. Other places say if you are providing a pump, then you have to provide an oil interceptor or even a separate tank to collect the pump discharge. About the only thing I have found agreement on is the need for the pump to connect indirectly to the sanitary building drain.

I design projects all across the country. I've learned that one of the first questions to ask is, "How does the local authority view elevator

sumps?" By taking the time to inquire about code interpretations, you may be preventing the need for a costly change order later. From experience I know that, no matter what you do in your design, the authority having jurisdiction will want something else. You can do it now or do it later, but sooner or later you will end up getting the information and then designing the system to accommodate the authority's requirements.

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Part of my affiliation with ASPE is to take questions passed on from the Society office. If you call the office and ask a technical question, the odds are they are going to ask you to give me a call. The questions are diverse, covering all kinds of subjects. Usually they are not from the ASPE membership. Often someone is looking for information on a product or has a question about how a product is applied. Sometimes, though, the question has to do with the way a system is designed or functions. And often the best answer is the one found by open discussion of the subject matter.

I want to encourage you to take the time to ask someone when you have a question. Better yet, take the time to answer someone else's question. You may be surprised at what you will learn along the way. The members of ASPE are open and willing to discuss issues or questions presented by one of their peers. Besides, when you take the time to ask for directions, you just might get to your destination that much faster. ■



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