



## Forensics Professional Group

Members of the Forensics Professional Group are interested in all aspects of human factors as applied to litigation matters, both civil and criminal.

FPGs goal is to bring ergonomic data and approaches to the investigation of losses influenced by design or by human limitations. Arguments may be presented on the degree to which a design meets current standards and known limitations and capabilities of the prospective users. The features and provisions for safety, instructions, and foreseeable misuses are also examined.

### TECHNICAL FOCUS

The role of the expert witness in the judicial process differs from that of the ordinary (percipient) witness in that an expert may give opinion testimony based on specialized knowledge and training, while a percipient witness is restricted to specific information experienced or observed concerning the event under consideration. Anyone with knowledge in an area of practice well beyond that likely in a jury member may be declared by the Court to be an expert witness. However, an expert's credentials are often important to judges and juries in their evaluation of whether the witness is qualified as an expert.

Human factors/ergonomics professionals are often uniquely qualified to evaluate the interactions of people with machines and procedures. They are well prepared to apply the scientific data on operator performance in practical operating settings.

### WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Forensic human factors specialists or human factors engineering consultants are often asked to investigate issues that have not been studied under controlled laboratory or field investigation. Forensic professionals often use demonstrations, field tests, visibility studies, and other systematic studies to support their opinions expressed in depositions and trial.

The challenge to the human factors/ergonomics expert is to apply generalized related scientific data to a specific occurrence and to determine and explain which conclusions are supported by this data and which are not.

## MEMBERSHIP

The FPG has approximately 250 members, many of whom work as consultants to attorneys and insurance companies representing parties in lawsuits. They frequently testify as expert witnesses in depositions, hearings, and trials.

The FPG seeks to foster the exchange of information among members and to promote the development and applications of human factors data and methods to the presentation or refutation of claims made in a lawsuit.

## BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

The Forensics Professional Group, like other technical groups within the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, performs a variety of functions and services for its members. In addition to sponsoring and reviewing technical sessions at the Annual Meeting of the Society, the FPG conducts special symposia and mock trials on topics of interest to members. A newsletter, *The Forum*, is sent to members twice a year.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Readers who would like to learn more about human factors in forensics and explore the possibilities of practice in this area are urged to join the FPG. Except for Officers, one does not need to be a member of the Society to join FPG, though most do join the Society as well.

## REPRESENTATIVE REFERENCES

- Noy, Y.I. & Karwowski, W. (Eds.), (2005). *Handbook of Human Factors in Litigation*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press
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- Olson, P.L. (1996). *Forensic Aspects of Driver Perception and Response*. Tucson: Lawyers & Judges Publishing Co.
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