GEOTECHNICAL REPORTING

PSU Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering May 2005

There is a difference in the academic analysis reporting and the professional report style in geotechnical practice. You might want to begin to understand this difference and follow the checklist and guidelines given below.

STYLE

1. Try to develop a generic writing style that is concise and clear without repetition. Use bullets if possible to highlight important points.
2. Introducing equations and tables in the text is fine if kept to a minimum. The more complex quantitative data and all calculations should stay in Appendices.
3. Follow the recommendations given by ASCE “Journal Style Manual”, or the “Guidance for Authors”.
4. Stay consistent with units. If you prefer Tsf (TSF, or tsf ...) then don’t flop to ksf *for no apparent reason.*
5. Look for a logical division in the text for major and minor headings etc.

CONTENT

1. **Always, always** remember that the person you submit the work to should be thought as your client, if they paid you money or not. Your professional reputation depends on the present job (the last job is quickly forgotten).
2. Never concede you don't understand a method, or some other company messed up. Accept responsibility and make clear you confidence in your recommendations. If you have low confidence in the work this implies **high** risk and you should expand on this. If additional testing/design/analysis should be done then suggest this.
3. Discuss your understanding of the limitations of the method you selected. Do you have the appropriate input data? Maybe this method is to predict settlement and all you have is failure information. The cohesion, c, and phi say **nothing** about stiffness or about how the soil got to failure.
4. If you are uncomfortable with the method, but nothing else is available, try to understand the sensitivity of the output to selected geotechnical parameters. Keep the time invested here short, it can get out of hand. Does your parametric investigation make sense?
5. Consider in your discussion whether the data and the method are theoretically sound, or just plain empirical voodoo! Develop a sense of judgment on what 'seems' reasonable and what is not.
6. Have your work in-house reviewed and develop a thick skin!

Avoid the lawyers!