



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Make Them Laugh!

Chairperson's Corner

by Amy S. Timmons

I'd like to keep my head down and just continue working, but I have a column to write. What to do, what to do, what to do. So many (and yet so few) ideas are revolving in my thoughts—ethics, cash balance plans, Society of Actuaries elections, new opportunities for actuaries, education of pension actuaries, the new exam syllabus... All topics I could spout great wisdom on. (Yeah, right).

Yet I turn to humans a topic that we, as actuaries, seem to be sorely in need of, given the recent articles slamming us on cash balance plans. I also could use a little lightening up, given that I live in Colorado with its recent tragedy. Since I never could remember a joke or its punch line, old ones are as funny to me as new ones. So stop me if you've heard this one... ..

Question:

How many actuaries does it take to screw in a light bulb?

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Excerpts from the PBGC Actuarial Valuation Report—1998 Fiscal Year

Editor's Note: The 1998 Annual Report of the PBGC and the complete 1998 Actuarial Valuation Report, including additional actuarial data tables, are available from Loretta Berg at the PBGC, (202) 326-4040, upon request.

The 1998 Annual Report of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) contains a summary of the results of the September 30, 1998, actuarial valuation. The purpose of this separate Actuarial Valuation Report is to provide greater detail on the valuation of future benefits than is presented in PBGC's Annual Report.

Overview

The PBGC calculated and validated the present value of future benefits (PVFB) for both the single-employer and multi-employer programs and of non-recoverable financial assistance under the multi-employer program. For the single-employer program, the liability as of September 30, 1998, consisted of:

- \$10.90 billion for the 2,655 plans that have terminated
- \$3.31 billion for 26 probable terminations

Liabilities for "probable terminations" reflected reasonable estimates of the losses for plans that are likely to terminate in a future year. These estimated losses were based on conditions that existed as of PBGC's fiscal year-end. It is likely that one or more events subsequent to PBGC's fiscal year-end will occur, confirming the fact of the loss. In addition, the liability for reasonably possible terminations has been calculated and is discussed in Note 9 to the financial statements on page 37 of PBGC's 1998 Annual Report. A discussion of PBGC's potential claims and net financial condition over the next ten years is presented on pages 11-13 of that report.

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Chairperson's Column

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Answer:

How many did it take last year? The year before that?

Three actuaries are target shooting. The first misses long, the second misses short. The third actuary jumps up and yells, "Bulls eye!"

Actuaries are flexible, they are either right, or can prove it to be so.

She was only an actuary's daughter...but she knew her surrender value.

Two people are flying in a hot air balloon and realize they are lost. They see a person on the ground, so they yell to him, "Can you tell us where we're at? We're lost." The person on the ground replies, "You're in a hot air balloon, about 200 feet off the ground." One of the people in the balloon replies to the person on the ground, "You must be an actuary. You gave us information that is accurate, but completely useless."

Question:

What is the difference between an introverted actuary and an extroverted actuary?

Answer:

An introverted actuary stares at his own feet during a conversation, while an extroverted one stares at the other person's feet. (A personal favorite of a client of mine).

Actuaries are people who skipped the first six grades of school when all the other kids were learning short words.

An actuary is someone who'd rather be completely wrong than approximately right.

An actuary is a person who passes as an expert on the basis of a prolific ability to produce an infinite variety of incomprehensible figures calculated with microscopic precision from the vaguest of assumptions based on debatable evidence from inconclusive data derived by persons of questionable reliability for the sole purpose of confusing an already hopelessly befuddled group of persons who never read the statistics anyway. (WHEW!)

Question:

What did God say when he created actuaries?

Answer:

Go figure! And they took it literally.

A consulting actuary is a person who, when asked what time it is, tells you how to build a watch.

Old actuaries never die, they just get broken down by age and sex.

There are three kinds of actuaries. Those who can count and those who can't.

An actuary is someone who expects everyone to be dead on time.

Question:

How much is 2 plus 2?

Answers:

Marketing vice president: "22,"

Accountant: "4," Mathematician: "I can demonstrate it equals 4 with the following proof," Actuary: "What do you want it to equal?"

Question:

What's the difference between a lotto player and an actuary?

Answer:

A lotto player will sometimes get the numbers correct.

You can take all the actuaries in the world and put them end to end, and they still won't reach agreement.

Watching an actuary give a speech is a little like watching a dog play checkers. He can't do it very well, but it's kind of interesting to watch him try.

An actuary is a person who immediately sees the difficult way of doing something.

An actuary is a person who never makes a little mistake.

Give an actuary an inch and she'll measure it.

You can always tell an actuary, but not much.

An actuary is a place where they bury dead actors.

An actuary is a person who uses highly precise methods to go from unwarranted assumptions to foregone conclusions.

An actuary designed a new coverage "Senility Insurance." She expected low claims because, "if you remember that you have a policy, it is proof that you are not senile."

A long one, but good one: Driving to a meeting, a motorist was taking a short cut along a narrow road through the mountains of England. His Jaguar slowed almost to a halt behind a large flock of sheep. "I shall be late now," he thought. Then he recalled his promise to his wife that he would buy a present for their young son's birthday at a store in the town he was now bypassing. He also thought of the height of the grass in his backyard, and he called out to the shepherd, "I say, if I can tell you inside one minute exactly how many sheep you have in your flock, would you give me one of them?" The shepherd smiled to himself. "All right then," he said. The motorist got out his calculator, pushed some buttons, and before the minute was up announced, "Six hundred and eighty-five." The shepherd was amazed.

"You've done it!" he exclaimed. The motorist took hold of the smallest animal he could see and pushed it into his car. Just then, the shepherd asked him, "If I can guess your profession, would you give the animal back to me?" "Yes, okay, that's fair. Why not? You can have half a minute," replied the motorist. Back came the instant reply, "You're an actuary." Open-mouthed, the actuary gasped, "How did you guess?" The shepherd answered, "Easy. You took the dog."

OK, most of these you have probably heard at least once but they should have still made you smile. After all, if we can't laugh at ourselves.... My thanks (and apologies) to everyone who answered my call for jokes. Contrary to popular belief, actuaries do have a sense of humor and some make it a hobby to collect actuarial jokes. Sure made it an easy column for me to write. Now back to work because people worry when actuaries smile too much.

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