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CIVIL ENGINEERING ACADEMY PODCAST

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CEA 76 - WHICH CIVIL PE EXAM IS EASIEST TO TAKE? WHICH IS HARDEST?

As engineers with an analytical science-based background, we tend to rely a lot on what the numbers tell us about something. Therefore, the statistics on the Civil PE Exam gives us a hint on which depth exam can be considered the easiest one to take and pass. Today, however, Isaac combines his years of experience as a test taker himself and as an instructor to those seeking their PE license to dissect these numbers and the amount of work each exam requires.

On a 5-item rank, going from the most difficult to the easiest exam, the top of the list according to Isaac would definitely be the *Structural Depth Exam*. This is simply because of the amount of material we need to know in order to successfully take and pass this exam. We need to have a pretty good understanding of about 12 structural codes and standards, or at least know where to find them, which means we have to go through them and study them. This just adds up to the amount of preparation time we need to put in, which already requires a lot of discipline from us.

As the second-hardest depth exam to take, we've got the *Construction Depth Exam*. It is often misconstrued as being an easy exam to take, which drives many engineers to go into that thinking it's going to be as easy as it's believed to be. The problem with construction, however, is that we get tested on a really wide range of topics, which means we have to know a little bit of everything. That should not be surprising since construction touches on every other discipline of the field. So, in addition to requiring us to know a lot of different topics, the questions can get pretty wordy and complicated. This type of question can easily mislead us and cause us to fail.

Continuing on the rank, the next exam is the *Transportation Depth Exam*, which has the second-highest pass rate and the biggest volume of test takers. While it is one of the most demanding exams in terms of knowing standards and codes, the beauty of the transportation exam lies in its simple, look-up type of questions. That is, we just have to know the codes and standards really well so that we can look it up, go find it, plug it

in what you need to know, and you move on to the next question.

The last two exams can be considered the easiest ones out of the 5-item list. They are the *Geotechnical* and *Water Resources Depth Exams*. Even though each of them has its particularities, they are not as demanding in terms of the volume of material we need to study as the top three. Therefore, we do not need to spread out attention too thin. We can basically focus on either *Geotech* or *Water Resources*, depending on which one we choose to take, allowing us to spend more time diving into the specific topics within each of them as opposed to the other three depth exams, which require us to know a bit of a lot of different topics and do not allow us to deeply dive into details.

Resources

PPI - [Website](#)

Built Bar - [Website](#)

CEA Episode 51 - [Tim Miller \(NCEES\)](#)

Civil PE Exam Statistics - [NCEES](#)

ASCE 7 - [Website](#)

OSHA Technical Manual - [OTM](#)

Civil PE Review Course - [Link](#)

Civil FE Review Course - [Link](#)

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