

State News for NSPE Members

UVM STEM Complex Takes the Prize

The University of Vermont STEM Complex recently was named the winner in ENR New England's Best Projects competition in the Best Higher Education/Research category. The project was completed in August 2019, and its three interconnected buildings are the university's largest-ever capital project. The complex houses: chemistry, physics, engineering, mathematics, and computer science; twenty state-of-the-art teaching labs; seven media-rich classrooms; faculty labs; and comfortable meeting spaces for student and faculty interaction. Vermont's PC Construction Co. was the general contractor for the \$80 million project, which involved the demolition of two existing buildings and the construction of two new buildings in the center of campus.



Innovation Hall

Williston Residents Consider New Energy Plan

The town of Williston's selectboard is holding public meetings on adopting an energy plan that would help the state meet its renewable energy goals, according

to the [Williston Observer](#). If the plan is adopted, the state would consider the town “energy compliant” and would receive “substantial deference” in renewable energy siting decisions. Vermont has set a goal of sourcing 90% of the state’s energy needs from renewable sources by 2050. A compilation of enhanced town energy plans can be viewed [here](#).

Tops in High-Tech Exports

Of all state economies, Vermont’s has the highest share of high-tech manufacturing exports, according to a new report from the [Information Technology Industry Council](#). At 5.5%, Vermont ranks ahead of Texas, Oregon, Louisiana, and Indiana. The average high-tech sector wage in the state is \$74,635. Read an article from [Axios](#).

At Virtual PECon, NTSB Chair Discusses Florida Bridge Collapse

In a session on August 5, National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Robert Sumwalt III explained the role of the NTSB and the agency’s investigation and [report](#) on the deadly pedestrian bridge collapse at Florida International University in Miami.



In March 2018, a pedestrian bridge under construction at FIU collapsed—claiming six lives. Despite evidence of severe cracking, the engineer of record insisted that the cracking did not pose a safety problem, according to the NTSB report. The university wanted to enhance pedestrian safety by constructing the bridge over a multilane highway that had been the scene of a pedestrian fatality. It would also serve as a unique gathering place for students, faculty, and university visitors.

“We all know that cracking in concrete is going to happen. That’s acceptable. But in this case, we saw structural cracks that were 40 times larger than is typically acceptable,” Sumwalt stated. The bridge was designed using an “accelerated bridge construction” design method.

The NTSB identified three critical errors: 1) The bridge was under-designed. 2) The peer review was insufficient; and 3) There was a failure to close the bridge to traffic and workers.

During the session, Sumwalt outlined how failures at all levels to stop work on the project or to close the highway to vehicle traffic and pedestrians played a

significant role in the tragedy. He emphasized the responsibility to speak out for public safety no matter what.

“I saw those crushed cars. Six people lost their lives because of what I will call hubris and professional arrogance,” he stated. “I don’t care where you fit on the totem pole, if something doesn’t look right, you have an ethical and moral obligation to wave the flag.”

Access Virtual PECon Webinars

NSPE members who registered for an all-access pass and individual sessions can access webinar recordings at their convenience. Members who were unable to attend PECon can [purchase and access](#) some individual sessions at a discounted member price.

Coming Soon: ‘Fireside Chat’ Series

NSPE is hosting a set of fireside chat style webinars on legislative issues affecting the future of the engineering profession, as well as the here and now.

Monday, August 31 (TBD)

Diversity is the Future of Engineering: Opportunities in STEM Education

Monday, September 14 (3 p.m. ET)

Building for the Future, with US Rep. Bruce Westerman, P.E. (R-AR)

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