

State News for NSPE Members

Registration Open: 2021 Montana Annual Joint Engineers Conference

Registration is open for the [Annual Joint Engineers Conference](#). The conference will be held at the Delta Colonial Hotel in Helena on **November 3-5**. Registration closes on November 1 and is discounted for society members. Students can attend for \$25.

Hotel Accommodations

Conference participants must contact the Delta Colonial Hotel directly at 406-443-2100 to reserve a room under the conference room block pricing. The block is only available until October 1.

Visit the Montana Society of Engineers [website](#) for the conference schedule and session details.

Montana PE Hall of Fame

The 2020 and 2021 [Montana Professional Engineers Hall of Fame](#) inductees will be honored at a banquet during the Joint Engineers Conference on Wednesday, November 3 (5 p.m.-8 p.m.).

Recipients are honored with a commemorative plaque residing at Montana State University in Roberts Hall, the original home of the MSU's Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering.

2020 Inductee

William J. Wetzel, P.E.

2021 Inductee

Robert J. Peccia, P.E.

Stimulus Infrastructure Funds Headed to Water and Sewer Projects

An initial round of funding drawn from Montana's share of the March federal coronavirus relief bill is heading toward 86 water and sewer projects around the state, according to the *Montana Free Press*.

The awards, totaling nearly \$127 million, were formally announced on [September 9] by Governor Greg Gianforte. They follow an allocation process that was outlined by the Montana Legislature this spring in which project applications were submitted by local government entities, ranked by staff at the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and reviewed by an advisory committee last month.

"Montana is leading the nation in making critical water and sewer infrastructure investments, with more than 80% of them supporting our rural communities," Gianforte said in a statement. "With funds devoted toward constructing new systems and improving existing ones, more Montana communities will have access to reliable, sustainable water and wastewater systems."

[Read more.](#)

Canadian Coal Company Petitions to Weaken Montana Water Standards

Canadian coal company Teck Resources Limited has asked the Montana Board of Environmental Review to weaken a new water standard at the border between the state and British Columbia, where the company's coal mines have been leaching pollutants for years into the Kootenai River basin, including Lake Koocanusa. The federal agency plans to file an opposition to the petition.

The water quality standard was created to protect fish species, in which elevated levels of the chemical byproduct selenium continue to be found, [according to the Flathead Beacon](#). Teck Resources is the only company directing mining byproducts into BC's Elk River, which enters Montana and joins the Kootenai River. In the petition, the company argued the standard is higher than federal standards. It is also seeking permission to build more mines in BC. Meanwhile, a Canadian [watchdog group](#) is looking into whether the country's federal government failed to stop the years of pollution from Teck Resources' mines.

Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](#).

Anti-Licensing Forces Miss the Point

Extreme anti-licensing bills have popped up in numerous states and are posing a threat to the rigorous and established professional standards followed by PEs, architects, and others who design and construct the built environment, [according to an op-ed in The Hill](#).

Lawmakers calling for these extreme measures don't differentiate between barbers and manicurists, for example, and PEs and architects, say Tom Smith, executive director of ASCE, and Michael Armstrong, CEO of NCARB. "In their absolutist free-market view, reflected in the language of their model legislation, a visit to a barbershop or beauty salon should be treated the same as designing a bridge or water treatment plant."

The legislative proposals range from measures that [would eliminate licensing entirely](#) to so-called "Universal Licensing" bills that would require states to accept licenses from any state regardless of whether the out-of-state license had the same level of qualifications behind it.

NSPE Calls for PE Role in AI Risk Management

To protect the public from the potential dangers of artificial intelligence applications, NSPE is calling for the involvement of licensed professional engineers in the AI development process.

NSPE's [recommendations were submitted](#) to the National Institute of Standards and Technology in response to NIST's request for input on an artificial intelligence risk management framework. The recommendations advocate for professional engineers or certain certified individuals to be included within the risk management framework, which covers all levels of development and implementation.

"This individual would be responsible for making decisions related to protecting the public, including those who would use or potentially be affected by an AI application," wrote NSPE President Rick Guerra, P.E., F.NSPE. "Oversight responsibility should include having the authority to approve or reject the process, methodology, or other characteristics of the specific AI project. Having a credentialed individual to ensure these considerations are made can reduce risk that an artificial intelligence application will fail."

Meet the 2021 Scholarship Winners

The [NSPE Education Foundation](#) recently awarded several scholarships to support talented students pursuing engineering. Meet the 2021 winners:

Markie Ash, of Waupaca, Wisconsin, is winner of the

[Auxiliary Legacy Scholarship](#) and the [George B. Hightower, P.E. Fellowship](#) . Ash is studying civil engineering with a structural emphasis at University of Wisconsin-Platteville. The \$2,500 auxiliary scholarship is awarded annually to a female undergraduate entering, or continuing, her junior year of a four-year ABET-accredited engineering program. The \$3,000 Hightower Fellowship is awarded annually to an engineering undergraduate or graduate student who is enrolled in, or graduated from, an ABET-accredited engineering program.



Justin Sivasothy is this year's recipient of the [Maureen L. and Howard N. Blitman, P.E., Scholarship to Promote Diversity in Engineering](#) . The \$5,000 scholarship is awarded to a high school senior from an ethnic minority going into an ABET-accredited engineering degree program at a four-year college or university. Sivasothy, of Sugar Land, Texas, is attending the University of Texas at Austin.

The \$5,000 [Steinman Scholarship](#) has been awarded to five students studying in ABET-accredited programs this academic year. **Michael Kadus** (Chicago, Illinois) is studying industrial engineering at Purdue University. **Robert Schneider** (West Coxsackie, New York) is studying civil engineering at Clarkson University. **Annabel Sharnowski** (Novi, Michigan) is studying mechanical engineering with a minor in electrical engineering at the University of Michigan. **Noah Struck** (Alexandria, Minnesota) is studying civil engineering at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. **Jacob Witlin** (Ellicott City, Maryland) is studying fire protection at the University of Maryland.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: MICHAEL KADUS, ROBERT SCHNEIDER, ANNABEL SHARNOWSKI, NOAH STRUCK, AND JACOB WITLIN

Nominations Open for Federal Engineer of the Year Award

Honoring the commitment of federal engineers to innovation and service is the hallmark of the [Federal Engineer of the Year Award](#) . Nominations for the award, which attracts participation from more than a dozen federal agencies, are open until **October 31**.

The FEYA ceremony is scheduled for February 24, 2022, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. Tickets will be available for sale in January. [Apply or nominate a worthy engineer](#) .

The 2021 Federal Engineer of the Year

Major Monica Pickenpaugh, Ph.D., P.E., of the US Air Force, was named NSPE's 2021 Federal Engineer of the Year Award winner during a [virtual awards event](#) in February. As US Forces Korea's chief of construction, she directed \$5.7 billion of funded construction in the Republic of Korea. As part of a sharing agreement with the US, the construction program supports USFK commanders' defense efforts through critical projects.



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