

State News for NSPE Members

Higgins Avenue Bridge delays will allow for cost and design adjustments

State engineers say an eight-to-12 month delay in rebuilding the Higgins Avenue Bridge should allow for projected costs to more closely match actual construction expenses. But they also saying the state will make sure the public's investment is cost effective.

If the original plans had worked out for the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), contractors would have been starting the initial work right now to reconstruct the aging bridge. However, MDT was thrown a curve ball when the only contractor to bid on the project said it would cost nearly \$38 million -- far above the state's \$16 million estimate.

MDT District Administrator Bob Vosen says the problem is rising construction costs, and the changes in acquiring some of the materials for the project.

[Read full story.](#)

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15 FREE

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Rising to Advocacy Challenges in 2020

The past year was a busy one for advocacy at both the state and federal levels. NSPE members didn't disappoint in 2019 when the Society's Government Relations team reached out for support on a variety of issues—licensing exemptions, licensing access, computer tracking software, and even changes to the IRS tax code. Because of this activity, NSPE's profile, issues, and positions were elevated and taken seriously by elected officials. This puts the Society in a much stronger position for 2020.

NSPE launched 14 advocacy campaigns in 2019, and 698 members responded—logging a total of 1,529 actions and contacting 317 state and federal lawmakers. That's an increase of more than 500% over 2018 activity! In addition, NSPE kicked off the first-ever PE Day Lobby campaign to encourage members to meet with congressional staffers in district offices during the August recess. Seventy-one members participated in that effort, meeting with staffers from 78 offices in 28 states.

What issues are at the top of the 2020 legislative agenda?

Licensing exemptions remain a priority at both the federal and state levels. Access to professional licensing continues to get a lot of attention from lawmakers and special interest groups.

Resilience is another focus area. As sea levels rise, storms become stronger, and wildfires become more prevalent, PEs have opportunities and responsibilities to design and build systems and environments that can better withstand those forces.

As technology continues to advance and evolve, NSPE will engage in this issue as state and federal lawmakers work to determine the best policies for supporting emerging technologies while also protecting the public.

[Read the Policy Perspectives article on NSPE's 2020 advocacy agenda.](#)

NICET to Revise Underground Utilities Certification Program

The National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies, a division of NSPE, is revising its underground utilities construction certification program for engineering technicians. A [survey](#) conducted in partnership with the American Water Works Association shows a strong interest among engineers, manufacturers, and contractors working in water, wastewater, and stormwater for the program, as there is an expected shortage of qualified technicians as well as issues of quality work and experience among contractors. Ninety percent of respondents felt that their organizations would benefit from use of certified technicians.

These technicians can help satisfy utilities working to address aging water infrastructure that work will be done in a quality, lasting manner, explains Jim Wathen, P.E., F.NSPE, NICET's director of business development and former design-construction department manager at the Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District. In addition, he says, certified technician inspection can help reduce maintenance costs when projects are done right the first time.

The certification program will be relaunched as a computer-based test, with three levels of certification initially available focused on inspection of water, stormwater, and sanitary systems. New tests are scheduled to be available starting in the third quarter of 2020.

NICET is soliciting subject-matter experts from the underground utilities industry to write and review test questions for certification exams. NICET also needs additional individuals with various backgrounds and experience levels to provide ratings for each of the test questions. PE help is requested, and work can be done remotely. Interested? Email tech@nicet.org.

Don't Miss These Upcoming Webinars



NSPE provides the tools PEs need to keep current in the profession and advance their careers.

Register now for these upcoming webinars:

- [Licensing for Profitability, Agility and Growth for Small and Mid-Sized Engineering Firms](#). **February 5** at 2 pm Eastern.
 - [Emotional Intelligence at Work](#). **March 25** at 2 pm Eastern.
 - Spring Ethics Series:
 - [Engineering Ethics – Disclosure, Payment, Expert Testimony and Conflicts of Interest](#). **March 18** at 2 pm Eastern.
 - [Engineering Ethics – Conflicts of Interest, Licensure, Confidentiality and Public Criticism](#). **April 15** at 2 pm Eastern.
 - [Engineering Ethics – Objectivity and Truthfulness, Public Health and Safety, Signing and Sealing of Engineering Drawings and Misrepresentation](#). **May 13** at 2 pm Eastern.
 - [Bundle \(Parts 1, 2, & 3\)](#). Discounted price expires **March 17**.
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Don't Miss...

- [Submit for NSPE's Honor Awards](#). The deadline to submit nominations for the NSPE Award, the Distinguished Service Award, and the Young Engineer of the Year Award is **January 31**.
 - [Catch up on Communities](#). Liability insurance, examples of protecting the public, continuing education, and other topics of interest to PEs can be found on NSPE's online forum.
 - [Rigorous Professional Licensing Protects](#). NSPE President David Martini, P.E., F.NSPE, speaks up for public safety in a debate over licensure reform in Iowa.
 - [Despite the Odds](#). Flipping the usual perspective, a new report from DiscoverE looks at the factors that lead women to choose and persist in engineering.
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