

State News for NSPE Members

Grid Experts Grapple with ‘Resilience’ in Ida’s Wake

The widespread destruction left by Hurricane Ida after the storm plowed into Louisiana and headed up the East Coast made one thing clear: There’s more work to be done in building a resilient power grid, [reports E&E News](#). But how might solutions differ from New Orleans to New York, especially as climate change scrambles conventional wisdom about when and where extreme weather strikes? “The nature of the risk has changed,” said Saurabh Amin, an associate professor with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Natchez Mayor Calls Proposed Biorefinery ‘Historic’

A \$1.5 billion bio-refinery plant that could break ground as early as 2023 is stirring excitement in Natchez and Adams County, [reports Magnolia State Live](#). The facility, proposed by UK-based Velocys, would be one of only two facilities in the US that would specialize in the production of environmentally friendly fuel, especially jet fuel, made from wood waste. Mississippi officials hope the project will bring hundreds of jobs to the state. In a social media post, Natchez’s mayor called the future Bayou Fuels project “historic.”

Velocys has been working on product demonstrations. In one, Japan Airlines completed a successful flight from Tokyo to Sapporo powered by fuel made from wood in June. The company believes it was the first time a commercial airline has ever flown with wood-based fuel.

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 Pickenpugh, 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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