Power Plant’s Conversion to Natural Gas Proceeds

Demolition work at a coal-fired power plant in Lamar County has been completed as part of its conversion to natural gas generation, reports Power Engineering. Demolition of the 42-year-old R.D. Morrow Sr. Generating Station was carried out by Burns & McDonnell. Now begins excavation, piling and execution of the project’s foundation package. The repowered unit is expected to begin firing in summer 2022 and go commercial by March 2023.

Speedy Internet Coming to Rural Counties

A technology company headquartered in Ridgeland plans to install more than 33 miles of underground fiber infrastructure in unserved parts of Hinds, Madison, Amite, and Pike counties, and will offer ultra-fast broadband internet access to consumers and businesses in those rural areas by the end of the year, reports the Vicksburg Post. The company, C Spire, was one of 19 recipients of a total of $75 million in federal grant funds under the Mississippi Broadband COVID-19 program.

MSU to Lead Drone Research

An alliance led by Mississippi State has received a $3.3 million grant from the Federal Aviation Administration to help integrate drones into the US airspace. The coalition includes 25 renowned research universities and more than 100 additional government and industry partners.

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)

Be on the lookout for more information!