

State News for NSPE Members

The Challenges of Volcanic Eruption Gets the Spotlight at Virtual PECON

On August 6, Hawaii Society member **Curtis Beck, P.E., F.NSPE**, lead a presentation on the topic of "Overcoming Volcanic Eruption Damage: How HDOT Kept Two State Highways Open" at the 2020 Virtual PE Conference.

Beck's presentation provided a detailed perspective of the nature of the damage to infrastructure caused by volcanic eruptions and the impact on daily public activities. The solutions shown to the engineering problems that arose illustrate how innovation and critical thinking are as important to the engineering profession as ever.



Curtis Beck, P.E., FNSPE, a native of Ohio and resident of Hawaii since 1979, is a consultant and construction manager for Bowers + Kubota Consulting of Waipahu, Hawaii since 2015. He is a retired department manager for Hawaii Electric Light Company (1993-2013) and has a bachelor's degree in engineering physics from Washington University, and a master's degree in mechanical engineering from Stanford University.

Beck has been a member of NSPE since 1981, has served in leadership roles at all levels chapter, state, and national, and currently serves on the NICET Board of Governors as Chairman.

Beware of Scam Targeting Licensees

The state Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) is warning its licensees and the general public of scammers posing as state officials to intimidate potential victims into divulging personal information.

The recent scam attempt involved a registered nurse who received a call from an individual pretending to be from the state Board of Nursing. The nurse was told that she was under investigation and this person requested personal information and used intimidation tactics.

DCCA advises the public that before any telephone communication occurs, a professional or vocational licensee that is under investigation by the department would first be notified in writing from the Regulated Industries Complaints Office.

[Read more.](#)

Partnership Seeks to Grow Engineering Talent Pipeline

An initiative between the engineering industry and educators is focused on collaborating to better understand Hawaii's current engineering talent pipeline and develop strategies to improve student preparedness for engineering careers.

The Oahu Engineering Sector Partnership recently held a virtual meeting to discuss the agenda on strengthening the talent pipeline. The steering committee is comprised of leaders from a wide range of organizations, including the UH Mānoa College of Engineering, Hawaii P-20, Bowers + Kubota Consulting, Oceanit, Castle and Waipahu High Schools, and Kamehameha Schools.

[Read more.](#)

Project Cancellations Sweeping the Nation as COVID-19 Intensifies Funding Shortfalls

Billions of dollars' worth of transportation projects are being delayed or canceled across the country as state and local governments make spending cuts due to the coronavirus pandemic. A *For Construction Pros* article highlights findings from a recent American Road and Transportation Builders' Association report that points out that 14 states and 19 local authorities have delayed or canceled road, transit and airport projects worth \$8.58 billion. These include Hawaii, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania,

Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia.

[Read more.](#)

Client Selection Is More Important Than Ever

By Rich Friedman

(Friedman & Partners)

When the economy starts to look rocky and project opportunities may be diminishing, it can be tempting to start saying yes to work that's not a great fit (but it's work) or chasing RFPs.

I saw a lot of this happening during the Global Financial Crisis (2008-2009), and I'm seeing it again now. In times of uncertainty, of course, we may be more willing to take on a project that is not ideal. But too often, firms start to convince themselves that throwing best practices out the window is their best option.

In this article, I discuss why that's not a good idea and offer some helpful guidelines for creating and implementing a thoughtful client selection process, one that strengthens your firm for the future.

[Read more.](#)

How Is the COVID-19 'New Normal' Affecting your Organization?

For the upcoming issue of *PE* magazine, an article will address how months later the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the work lives of NSPE members from different practice areas: construction, education, government, industry, and private practice.

How have your projects or organizational priorities changed? What have been some challenges or changes for the better? Have there been any new opportunities? Share your experiences with *PE* at pemagazine@nspe.org.

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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