

State News for NSPE Members

From the NSPE-DE President

By K. James Taylor, Jr., P.E.

This past month signified the beginning of my second year serving as president of NSPE-DE and as Delaware's representative for the House of Delegates. In the past year, I have spent most of my time learning about NSPE. This has led me to understand why it is so important to be a part of NSPE.



Here are some highlights of what has happened in the past year and what we have planned:

- Our 2020 Engineers Week Banquet was a huge hit once again. The 2021 Engineers Week banquet details will be announced in the coming months. Nominations for Engineer of the Year, Young Engineer of the Year, and scholarship applications will be available in the fall.
- We currently have 61 members in NSPE-DE. In the last 6 months, we have added 5 new members including 1 student membership. There are over 7,000 professional engineers in the State of Delaware. There is a lot of room for growth.
- We are working on developing a new presence with the University of Delaware and the renewal of the Student Chapter in the College of Engineering.
- We will continue of our support of MATHCOUNTS. Although the 2020 competition was cancelled and the 2021 competition will be switching to an

online format, we will continue to provide support for this program.

As I begin my second year, I look forward to pushing NSPE-DE to the next level. There is always room to help and get involved. We are currently looking to fill on the executive committee, including vice-president and secretary. We are also looking for committee members to fill the roles of Engineers Week Coordinator and MATHCOUNTS Coordinator. If you are interested, feel free to reach out for more information on how you can make an impact on the engineers and the future engineers in the State of Delaware. Get involved and be a part of the leadership for NSPE-DE!

UD Center Takes on Challenge of Plastics Recycling

A new center at the University of Delaware will be researching ways to [chemically transform plastic waste](#) into fuels, lubricants, and other products in an energy-efficient manner. Funded by an \$11.65 million grant from the US Department of Energy, the Center for Plastics Innovation is one of six new Energy Frontier Research Centers established across the US to accelerate scientific breakthroughs in critical areas. Worldwide, more than 350 million tons of plastics were produced in 2018 alone. Only 12% of this plastic waste is reused or recycled, according to an industry report.

Changes Afoot to DeIDOT Subdivision Plan Reviews

With input from the development and engineering communities, DeIDOT is changing its subdivision plan review process to help businesses and encourage economic growth, according to [a jdsupra.com article](#). “As part of the process to implement these changes, as of July 13, 2020, development engineers will be invited to DeIDOT’s Plan Review Meetings to permit more communication between DeIDOT and those engineers,” the article says.

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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