

State News for NSPE Members

Chemical Safety Board to Investigate Deadly Explosion at Tennessee Munitions Facility

The US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board will investigate the explosion at Accurate Energetic Systems near Bucksport that killed 16 people.

“This is one of the deadliest industrial incidents in our country in years,” said Steve Owens, the chairperson of the Chemical Safety Board, in a news release. “The (Chemical Safety Board) investigators will conduct an initial assessment of the incident location and will be meeting with (Accurate Energetic Systems) management, the (US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives), and other officials to identify the information necessary to determine the cause of this horrific event.”

The ATF estimated that on October 10, between 24,000 and 28,000 pounds of explosives detonated in a building on the 1,300-acre Accurate Energetic Systems campus located in Humphreys County, Tennessee.

A preliminary investigation by the ATF determined the blast originated in a building on the campus where “mixed explosive materials were heated in production kettles.” Investigators have so far been able to identify 14 of 16 people who died. Two remain unidentified.

The Chemical Safety Board’s investigation begins now that the ATF has concluded its activities at the Accurate Energetic Systems campus and returned control of the site to the company. [Read more in the Tennessee Outlook.](#)

Radiant Chooses Tennessee for First Reactor Factory

California-based startup Radiant Industries has decided that it will build its first reactor factory on a Manhattan Project site in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, an investment of \$280 million, [Nuclear Engineering International reports](#). With

construction expected to start in early 2026, Radiant says it will be on track to deliver its first mass-produced Kaleidos nuclear generator by 2028. Within a few years, it will scale up production to 50 reactors a year and plans to name the new factory R-50.

Radiant's Kaleidos microreactor design is a transportable high-temperature gas-cooled reactor (HTGR) using high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU) tristructural-isotropic (TRISO) fuel, helium gas coolant, and prismatic graphite blocks. It has a capacity of 3 MWt or 1 MWe. Each 70-tonne microreactor will fit into a single shipping container. Radiant says the reactor can set up to be producing power within 48 hours of delivery at a customer site. The reactor has a five-year fuel cycle and a 20-year service life. Refuelling is carried out at a remote maintenance facility.

The land for Radiant's new factory, which encompasses portions of the historic K-27 and K-29 Manhattan Project sites, was purchased from the Oak Ridge Industrial Development Board. "What was formerly the first Manhattan Project site will now be the site of the first portable nuclear generator production," said Radiant CEO and Founder Doug Bernauer. "By 2028, we'll be rolling out the first factory-built nuclear generator, and within a few years we'll be producing over a dozen per year." [Read more.](#)

Nashville's Airport Transit Tunnel Could Cost Boring at Least 240 Million

The Elon Musk-owned company preparing to dig a 10-mile tunnel from downtown Nashville to the airport is estimating a cost of \$240 million to \$300 million to build two underground lanes to ferry passengers back and forth, [the Tennessee Lookout reports](#).

Jim Fitzgerald, chief of development for The Boring Company, told the Nashville Rotary Club Monday that's how much the company would charge the state under a commercial contract. Because of its engineering-based operations, which keep most facets of work in-house, Fitzgerald said his firm can do the job cheaper than the industry rate of roughly \$500 million to more than \$1 billion per mile for two lanes. Riders would catch Musk's Tesla vehicles at above-ground locations and ride in tunnels to their destination.

"That is one of the ways that we are trying to disrupt the tunneling transportation infrastructure industry," Fitzgerald said in response to audience questions.

A 2018 transportation plan proposed by former Mayor Megan Barry projected the cost for a light rail system at \$200 million per mile, a total cost of \$5.4 billion for 24

miles of rail along five corridors. Mayor Freddie O'Connell's new transportation plan focuses more on bus transit and doesn't include light rail construction. [Read more.](#)

Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](#).

Call for NSPE Vice President Nominations

NSPE is seeking nominees to serve as vice president on the Board of Directors. The vice president serves four consecutive years: 2026-27 as vice president, 2027-28 as president-elect, 2028-29 as president, and 2029-30 as immediate past president. To learn more about qualifications, time and financial commitments, and how to apply, [please view the call for nominations packet in the governance section of the leadership toolbox](#).

Nominations are due to the NSPE Secretary at executive@nspe.org by **January 12, 2026**. Additional questions can be sent to executive@nspe.org.

Nominations Deadline Extended for FEYA

Federal engineers are at the forefront of our nation's most vital priorities from infrastructure and innovation to defense, public health, and safety. Honoring the commitment of federal engineers to innovation and service is the hallmark of the Federal Engineer of the Year Award (FEYA). Nominations for the 2026 award have been extended until November 30, 2025. [Visit the online portal for full guidelines and submission details.](#)



Why Does FEYA Matter?

Lt. Col. Brigham Moore, Ph.D., P.E., PMP, was named the 2025 Federal Engineer of the Year. Here's what Lt. Col. Moore had to say about the impact this award has had on his career: *"Being selected as Top Ten Finalist and ultimately as the Federal Engineer of the Year this past year has been an incredible highlight of my career. Within the Air Force, it has provided me opportunities to mentor and give back to the engineering community that I love. Professionally, it has reconnected me with previous advisors and engineering faculty, opening up doors and networking me with some people that I did not previously know. Finally, and personally, it served as a huge bolster to my confidence and commitment to continue making meaningful change with each project and major decision as I move forward."*

Learn about Moore's government service and contributions to the profession.



Engineers Week 2026 Resources and Outreach Grants

It's time to start planning for Engineers Week and Introduce a Girl to Engineering activities. NSPE members can [access resources on the NSPE website](#).

Outreach Grants

DiscoverE's grant opportunities are designed to support volunteer and educator efforts to inspire the next generation of innovators through hands-on exploration of engineering. Grants range from \$250 to \$1,000. The application period for the grants will close on November 3. [Access more information and apply](#).



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