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Monroe Professional Engineers Society

A Chapter of the New York State Society of Professional Engineers

657 East Avenue, Rochester, New York 14607

Dedicated to Professionalism in Engineering in the Interest of Public Safety and Welfare

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Governor Cuomo Vetoes Bill Requiring Inspection for Structural Integrity of Parking Garages and Ramps

In July of 2015, a two level parking garage in Johnson City (located near Binghamton, NY) collapsed leaving nearly two dozen vehicles trapped in the rubble. Fortunately, no deaths resulted from the incident. Later that same year, the five-level Collier Street garage in downtown Binghamton had to be closed due to severe deterioration.

Other parts of the country have seen similar catastrophic failures on parking garage and ramp structures, including the collapse of the Renaissance Towers garage in Dallas (October 2015), The Watergate Apartments garage in Washington, D.C. (May 2015), a parking garage in Boone, NC (September 2015), and another parking structure in Lexington, KY (September 2015).¹ Those of us in Western NY no doubt recall the partial collapse of the South Avenue Parking Garage in Downtown Rochester in 2006.

Current NY State building codes require an inspection of parking garages every three years. However, these inspections only include general fire safety and upkeep.² They do not require a structural evaluation by a qualified individual, i.e. professional engineer.³ The current standard is obviously lacking, considering the effect that typical NY State weather conditions can have on the concrete and steel structures of parking garages and ramps.

Considering the serious danger to public welfare apparent from these occurrences, NYS Assemblywoman Donna A. Lupardo of the 123rd Assembly District sponsored a bill to require a structural evaluation by a qualified, licensed engineer to occur every five years on parking structures. This bill, A9614A, was passed by the State Assembly and Senate, however Governor Cuomo choose to veto the bill. The text of the bill can be viewed at: <http://legislation.nysenate.gov/pdf/bills/2015/A9614A>.

The governor indicated that his primary reason for the veto was that the bill did not address the special circumstances in NY City. NYSSPE encouraged the governor to sign this bill into law, indicating that additional legislation could be proposed to address any special circumstances in NYC at a later time. This is common practice in NY State. The bill's sponsors felt that trying to incorporate special circumstances into the bill would overcomplicate it, thus making it more difficult to get through legislation.

NYSSPE continues to support Ms. Lupardo and the State Legislature in order to ensure public safety in our parking garages and ramps, either through regulatory means or additional legislation. A brief summary discussion of this topic can be viewed on The New York State Society of Professional Engineers' YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTGpmYzplVg&feature=em-subst_digest.

As always, we encourage active membership in the Monroe Professional Engineers Society. We are constantly striving to improve your membership but we always need more help. If you are interested in becoming an active member or have any questions, please email me at dcrobertspe@gmail.com or contact MPES through our website at www.monroepes.org/contactus/.

David C. Roberts, P.E., President, MPES

¹ <http://www.dallasvoice.com/common-parking-garage-collapses-10207017.html>

² <http://nysspe.org/2015/11/19/new-york-state-needs-a-state-wide-parking-structure-inspection-program/>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTGpmYzplVg&feature=em-subst_digest