

Labor

Little change in construction employment numbers in July

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that construction employment in July was relatively flat compared to June, with small gains in some sectors. Construction employment rose an unadjusted 0.1%, slowing after gains in June. The jobless rate declined slightly, from 4.0% to 3.8%, shaving off a small rise seen in June. That figure is still 0.4% higher than the 3.4% construction unemployment rate reported back in July 2018. ■

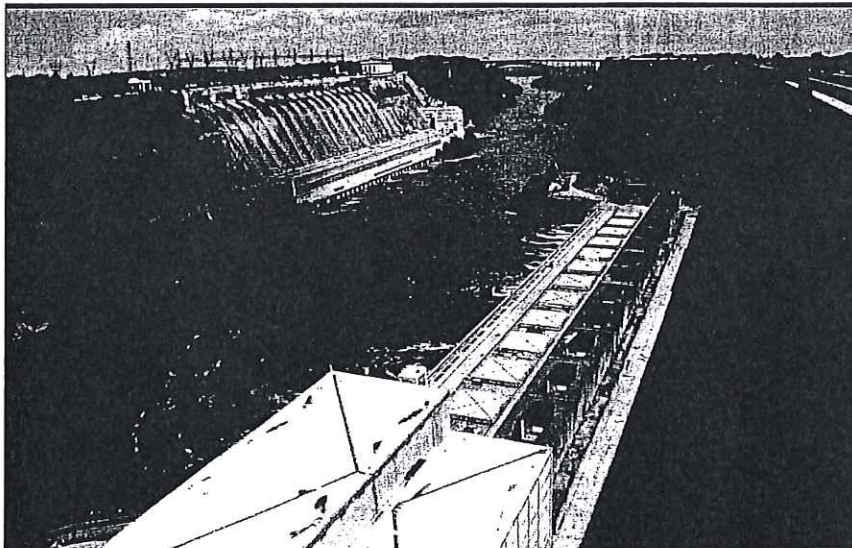
Infrastructure

Univ. of Wis. study calls for updating rainfall-frequency curves

Engineers, climate and hydrologic scientists need to work together to update current intensity-duration-frequency curves for rainfall and flooding—used to design

hydrologic infrastructure design and floodplain mapping—to ensure future infrastructure reliability, according to a new study by Daniel Wright, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Wright says that in many instances infrastructure has been designed to standards developed in 1961 and is already inadequate to handle more frequent flooding. **There was an average of 45 10-year storms and eight 100-year storms each year across the U.S. during the 1950s. Today, there are, on average, 62 10-year storms and 12 100-year storms per year, according to the study.**

Wright found that 100-year storms have become 85% more common in the eastern United States over the 1950-2017 period but are only 51% more common in the western United States. Wright suggests the use of nonstationary techniques to update the standards. ■



Keeping the Power Flowing

Niagara Project Is the Biggest Capital Project in NYPA History

The New York Power Authority is spending \$1.1 billion to extend the life of the Niagara Power Project, including the 2,525-MW Robert Moses station. The 15-year project is expected to begin later this year and will proceed in four phases, including comprehensive inspection of the stations' penstocks, refurbishing a 630-ton crane that enables mechanical work at the plant, upgrading and digitizing the control systems and building a new backup-control room. New York-based State Group was awarded a \$69-million contract to design and fabricate a platform to inspect the penstocks. Burns & McDonnell received a \$134-million contract to design and fabricate new control systems. The work is part of the state's effort to produce 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040. ■

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