

# THE UPDATE

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*The goal of our monthly update is to provide information on timely matters that may impact your practice and professional interests.*



## **WTC REPORT TRIGGERS SAFETY CONCERNS**

***The final draft of the U.S. government's \$16M investigation into the World Trade Center's tragedy was released late last month and has stirred controversy about NIST's 30 recommendations for changes to building code , standards and design strategies. Focusing on hazards presented by high-rises and new fire data, The International Code Council is also currently addressing the correct use of elevators in emergencies and has formed an ad-hoc committee on terrorism resistant structures.***



## **THE "WHAT IF" FACTOR FOR CA NUCLEAR POWER**

***The recent Indian Ocean tsunami has sent PG&E researchers probing into the likely effect of a Pacific Ocean tsunami on California's northern coastal nuclear power plants such as the Diablo Canyon power plant near San Luis Obispo and the retired Humboldt Bay plant. Based on long-term reoccurrence data of once every 300 years , PG&E scientists reported before the state's Seismic Safety Commission late last month that a tsunami in the Pacific Ocean could occur very soon. PG&E has decided to transfer the plants spent nuclear fuel from their cooling ponds to dry cask storage containers, which are believed to be safer.***



## **U.S. LOSING LEAD IN ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE**

***According to a recent National Bureau of Economic Research study, the U.S. is about to lose it's more than five-decade-long global dominance of engineering and science as the percentage of American engineering and science graduates starts lagging behind Europe and developing countries. Their report estimated that engineering and science accounted for 17% of U.S. university bachelor degrees in 2000 compared to a world average of 27% and a Chinese average of 52%. European Union universities also awarded 40% more engineering and science doctorates than the U.S. in 2001 and that***

***figure is expected to climb to almost 100% by the end of the current decade.***



### **INNOVATIVE PROCESS SPURS CONSTRUCTION**

***Construction engineers are now relying more and more on "premade" concrete to make foundations for houses and to expand commercial structures. The new \$132M Westin Hotel in South Boston will feature 1,600 precast concrete panels for the majority of floors and ceilings for the hotel's 790 rooms. This approach is quicker than pouring concrete in forms above ground and helps speed up completion. Furthermore since the panels can be made to exacting standards off -site, they can be painted directly which eliminates the need for ceiling coverings.***

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