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Civil Engineers Creating Design Standard for Athletic Field Light Structures

Reston, VA--The collapse of more than twelve light structures at athletic fields around the country over the past several years, and another 200 other sports lighting structures removed from service as a safety precaution, has prompted members of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) to examine these structures and create a new design standard for the industry.

The ASCE Athletic Field Lighting Structures Standard Committee was created in the fall of 2011 and is working to create a national consensus standard for the proper specification, design and system support of these structures.

“In the United States, current practices related to the specification, fatigue design, installation and on-going maintenance of athletic field or other area lighting structures are very inconsistent,” said Brian Reese, P.E. of ReliaPole Inspection Services Co., chairman of the committee. “When we started looking at these failures, we surmised that fatigue resulting from wind induced vibration as well as a lack of inspection and maintenance programs are believed to have played critical roles in these failures.”

Reese noted that in the past, some design professionals have used the International Building Code as a design guide, but that code is not particularly adaptive to lighting support structures. He said other designs rely on the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Standard Specifications for Structural Supports for Highway Signs, Luminaries and Traffic Signals*. Other designs rely on commercial grade specifications developed by the individual lighting system suppliers, Reese said.

Until the new committee comes up with a new, formal standard, the committee recommends the following interim measures:

1. Design professionals should use the AASHTO *Standard Specifications for Structural Supports for Highway Signs, Luminaries and Traffic Signals*, fifth edition with 2010 and 2011 interim revisions.

2. Designs should be made for a minimum life of 50 years and Fatigue Category I as it applies to the AASHTO Standard Specifications.
3. Owners should be encouraged to develop routine scheduled inspection and maintenance programs and contact qualified inspection professionals if cracks or corrosion is observed.

As the newly-formed committee moves forward it is actively seeking new members, especially those individuals directly affected by the committee activities. For information, contact Lee Kusek at lkusek@asce.org or Brian Reese, P.E., the committee chairman at breese@polesafety.com.

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Founded in 1852, American Society of Civil Engineers represents more than 140,000 civil engineers worldwide and is America's oldest national engineering society. For more information, visit www.asce.org.