



User Education

Although the bridge is constructed to code requirements and exceeds normal and customary standards for trail suspension bridges, good risk management dictated some public education concerning the use of the bridge. Public education consists of a series of notices and signs on both sides of the bridge advising the user public as follows:

- The bridge is limited to foot traffic.
- Although the bridge is designed for a live load of 30,000 pounds (110 people in a snowstorm), it was decided to post the occupancy of the bridge at 20 people. This was done for common sense reasons.

Case law in New Jersey indicates that when one has a bridge over a body of water and the body of water is known to be used for recreational purposes, it is prudent for the owner to post warning signs advising the public as to the inherent risk of jumping off the bridge. Either end of the Pochuck Quagmire Bridge is posted with a sign that reads “Shallow Water - Hidden Hazards.”

Project Safety Plan — Worker Safety

The 5,239 people hours on the bridge construction was completed with no accidents or injuries. This track record is especially good in that 53 percent of the people hours were performed by NY-NJ Trail Conference layperson volunteers performing a large variety of unfamiliar tasks in sometimes less than ideal conditions. This success on project safety was in large part due to the positive management style of Mr. Powers that created an awareness among all participants.

Prior to each day’s work, a “tailgate” meeting at the jobsite was held. The meeting would include the following:

- The work tasks to be undertaken that day. What-Who-Where-How.
- The possible hazards and safety measures to be employed.
- It was stressed to all the volunteers that if they were uncomfortable with a given task, either ask questions or ask for another job — there was plenty of work to go around.

The position the project engineer took is that although the project was volunteer driven, it should be treated no differently than any other major construction project. If the Pochuck Quagmire Bridge was being built by a professional contractor, the work force would be subject to Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) regulations. Since NJ Parks and Forestry employees were involved, and indeed in charge of the job site, Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Act (PEOSHA) applied to the project. In addition to the moral responsibility, a legal responsibility existed to implement a project health and safety plan, which was based on the following:

- Health and safety policy and program of the NJDEP, 5/20/91.
- N.J.S.A. 34:6A-25 PEOSHA.
- Condition 6 of the NJDEP stream encroachment permit specified that “no work shall be undertaken until such time as all other required approvals and permits have been obtained.”