

2011

# Bridge Security Guidelines



American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

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2011  
Bridge Security  
Guidelines



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American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials  
444 North Capitol Street, NW Suite 249  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-624-5800 phone/202-624-5806 fax  
[www.transportation.org](http://www.transportation.org)

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## FOREWORD

The events that unfolded during the September 11 attacks on America prompted bridge engineers to face a new and unusual form of extreme event design. This new and unusual extreme event prompted the engineering community to consider blast-resistant design in bridge analysis. Historically designers considered extreme event design to be limited to natural phenomenon such as earthquakes. Until September 11, 2001, rarely in the history of bridge design have engineers entertained designing bridges for an extreme event induced by man.

Shortly after September 11, concerns of possible attacks on our nation's bridges led the United States government to initiate the Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP), a panel of experts comprised of the country's most accomplished and renowned bridge engineers. This panel, along with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), was tasked with examining bridge and tunnel security, developing strategies and practices for deterring, disrupting, and mitigating potential attacks; and providing guidance to highway infrastructure owners and operators.

The knowledge and expertise of the BRP members laid the foundation for the understanding of bridge and tunnel security and are recognized for their significant contribution. Among the many BRP findings and recommendations are that outreach and education are needed to develop greater awareness and professional capacity to address bridge and tunnel security challenges. In their opinion, trained professionals are needed to understand and meet these challenges.

As a result of BRP's findings, the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) funded *Blast-Resistant Highway Bridges: Design and Detailing Guidelines*, hereafter referred to as NCHRP 12-72. For this project, a research team was tasked to develop, design, and detail guidelines for improving the structural performance and resistance to explosive effects for new and existing bridges.

This research was conducted by Eric B. Williamson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Williamson also served as the project's principal investigator. In the interim, the AASHTO Subcommittee on Bridges and Structures (SCOBs) formed a new technical committee on bridge and tunnel security called Technical Committee T-1 and was responsible for the review of NCHRP 12-72.

By February 2010, NCHRP 12-72 was published as NCHRP Report 640 *Blast-Resistant Highway Bridges: Design and Detailing Guidelines*. This document provided scientific experiments, background, and analytical research for bridge engineers looking for design solutions to enhance the structural performance and resistance of concrete bridge columns.

Because of the demand on bridge engineers to minimize risk of damage to bridges and human life, AASHTO and FHWA considered the development of an AASHTO guide specification based on NCHRP 12-72 to be of high importance. Naturally, Dr. Williamson was considered to be the most logical source to prepare such document and its first draft was presented to Technical Committee T-1 for review and comments. In Fall 2010, the committee approved this document and placed it on the 2011 SCOBs annual meeting ballot items for adoption.

In May 2011, this agenda item received SCOBs favorable vote and the document was titled as a guideline rather than a guide specification.

### How to Use This Guideline

This stand-alone document and its content is provided to the designer as a guideline and not design specification. Because the subject of blast and bridge security is complex, the research under NCHRP 12-72 was confined to common bridge structures rather than unique bridges.

The research focused on columns because they are integral to virtually all bridges regardless of the superstructure type. Additionally, because the loss of a critical column could compromise the integrity of most bridges, the research team elected to focus its efforts on reinforced concrete columns.

Although this document provides the designer with information on the response of concrete bridge columns subjected to blast loads as well as blast-resistant design and detailing guidelines and analytical models of blast load distribution, it is not the end-all answer to every question that exists on this subject. In contrast, this guideline document and its research shall be considered as the stepping stone toward the education this subject truly deserves and shall receive in future years.

The content of this guideline should be considered in situations where resisting blast loads are deemed warranted by the owner or designer. In such situations, blast load shall be applied in combination with all other applicable loads and other factors should be considered, such as the possibility of scour as well as intentional vessel collision.

Ultimately, mitigation measures may be the most cost-effective and practical means to enhance bridge security against blasts.

In some situations, depending on the nature and size of threat, these guidelines can result in outcomes that the owner or designer may consider infeasible and perhaps even unreasonable. Such outcomes may be an indication of severity in design assumptions such as excessive explosives (amount of TNT), inadequate stand-off distance, or both. In such

scenarios, owners and designers are encouraged to modify their design assumptions, such as stand-off distance, until they are able to arrive at tolerable design and detailing solutions.

Finally, these guidelines are not intended to be comprehensive; in fact, there are no recommendations in this document to design for a size of explosive or an appropriate stand-off distance. Such parameters are left to the discretion of owners, because they are in the best position to evaluate the specifics of a given situation.

Article numbering in NCHRP Report 645 was tied to that of *AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications*. Because this report has resulted in a stand-alone publication, it has been renumbered sequentially and article headers have been added in two cases. Table i-1 is included for those who are familiar with the NCHRP report. Appendix numbering has also been added for the user's convenience; see the Table of Contents.

**Table i-1—Conversion of NCHRP Article Numbering to Sequential Numbering**

Old Article Number (Referenced to LRFD)	New Article Number
2.7	1
2.7.1	1.1
2.7.2	1.2
2.7.3	1.3
2.7.4	1.4
—	2
3.4	2.1
3.7.5	2.2
3.14	2.3
3.14.16	2.3.1
3.15	2.4
3.15.1	2.4.1
3.15.2	2.4.2
—	3
4.7.6.2	3.1
4.7.6.3	3.2
5.10.13	4
5.10.13.1	4.1
5.10.13.2	4.2
5.10.13.3	4.3
5.10.13.4	4.4

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals as well as organizations have contributed their time, knowledge, and resources to allow for this document to be created. Recognizing every individual who has contributed to a major project such as this often is difficult and even may be impossible because of their many numbers and because their participation is usually in various periods over a long range of time. Despite this fact, this attempt is made to recognize as many individuals as possible. Without them, this knowledge never would have developed or would have been made available.

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 Dr. John M. Kulicki, BRP Vice Chair, Modjeski and Masters  
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 Mr. Henry Hungerbeeler, Missouri Department of Transportation and Chair AASHTO Transportation Security Task Force  
 Dr. Jeremy Isenburg, Weidlinger Associates, Inc.  
 Dr. Frieder Seible, Jacobs School of Engineering, University of California at San Diego  
 Mr. Kenneth E. Stinson, Peter Kiewit Sons, Inc.  
 Dr. Dan Chung Tang, T.Y. Lin International  
 Mr. Kary Witt, Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District

### NCHRP 12-72 Panel

Dr. Eric B. Williamson, Principal Investigator; Associate Professor, University of Texas, Austin, Texas  
 Dr. Oguzhan Bayrak, Professor, University of Texas, Austin, Texas  
 Dr. G. Daniel Williams, II, University of Texas, Austin, Texas  
 Ms. Carrie E. Davis, University of Texas, Austin, Texas  
 Mr. Kirk A. Marchand, Managing Principal, Protection Engineering Consultant, Dripping Springs, Texas  
 Mr. Aldo E. McKay, Project Engineer, Protection Engineering Consultant, Dripping Springs, Texas  
 Dr. John Kulicki, President, Modjeski and Masters, Inc., Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania  
 Dr. Wagdy Wassef, Project Manager, Modjeski and Masters, Inc., Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

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### Special Thanks

Ms. Mary Lou Ralls, Principal, Ralls Newman, LLC  
 Mr. George A. Christian, Former New York State Bridge Engineer  
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 Dr. Waseem Dekelbab, NCHRP

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**SECTION 1**  
**DESIGN AND LOCATION FEATURES**

**1.1—GENERAL**

An assessment of the importance of a specific bridge should be conducted during the planning of new bridges, rehabilitation of existing bridges, or both.

For bridges deemed important, a formal vulnerability study should be conducted and measures to mitigate the vulnerabilities should be incorporated in the design.

**C1.1**

This article presents a broad view of the issues that need to be considered during the planning and design of bridge projects to address bridge security. Bridge owners should establish criteria for the size and location of the threats to be considered when analyzing bridges for security as specified in Article 1.2. These criteria should take into account the type, geometry, and importance of the structure being considered.

Bridge owners are responsible for establishing the procedures by which bridge importance is assessed and by which formal vulnerability studies are conducted. This work can be carried out by bridge owners with appropriate experience or by retaining the services of a qualified security consultant.

Currently, there are no uniform procedures for assessing the importance of a bridge. Accordingly, it is up to the discretion of the bridge owner to establish the procedures required to assess the importance of a bridge. Factors common to many of the proposed procedures include the following:

- Social and economic impact of bridge loss,
- Role played by bridge in defense or security of region, state, and nation,
- Average daily traffic,
- Average daily truck traffic,
- Distance to nearest detour, and
- Symbolic importance.

Work is being done to produce a uniform procedure to prioritize bridges for security. In the absence of uniform procedures, some states have developed their own, incorporating security prioritization methods that, while similar, differ in the details. In addition, state procedures to assess bridge importance have been developed by departments of transportation to assist in prioritizing seismic rehabilitation. These procedures also may be used in conjunction with security considerations.

Guidance on security strategies and risk reduction may be found in the following documents: *Design of Critical Bridges for Security against Terrorist Attacks* (27), *A Guide to Highway Vulnerability Assessment for Critical Asset Identification and Protection* (21), *Improving Surface Transportation Security: A Research and Development Strategy* (10), *Protecting Public Surface Transportation against Terrorism and Serious Crime: An Executive Overview* (15), and *Recommendations for Bridge and Tunnel Security* (7), as well as in the *ASCE Journal of Bridge Engineering* articles “Analysis and Design of Critical Bridges Subjected to Blast Loads” (26), “Risk-based Prioritization of Terrorist Threat Mitigation Measures on Bridges” (17), and “Risk Management and Design of Critical Bridges for Terrorist Attacks” (25).