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**Historic Former Power Plant Restoration Project in New Bedford Wins
Engineering Excellence Award**
*Despite Unusual Challenges, Project Achieved Savings and Was Completed a
Month Early*

BOSTON — A project to clean up and restore one of the most significant landmarks along the waterfront of New Bedford, Massachusetts, has been recognized for engineering excellence by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts (ACEC/MA). The annual ACEC/MA Engineering Excellence Awards recognize engineering achievements demonstrating the highest degree of merit and ingenuity.

When [Burns & McDonnell](#) subsidiary Environmental Specialty Solutions (ESS) was called in by the new building owner, Sprague Massachusetts Properties LLC, to help with [the cleanup of the Cannon Street Power Station](#), the 100-year-old historic landmark had become so deteriorated, it had to be stabilized before crews could enter the building. The five-story, 150,000-square-foot facility had been a working power plant until the 1990s, when it was shut down and vacated. In the years following closure, a portion of the roof collapsed, allowing direct exposure to the elements and accelerating deterioration of much of the interior space. Additionally, inspectors found five flights of stairs that were unsafe; peeling lead-based paint; exposed asbestos insulation and roofing materials; poor air quality; and large numbers of birds and animals occupying the building.

Despite the abatement and restoration project's many challenges, it was completed a month ahead of the deadline and below the original budget. Most importantly, it was completed with zero safety recordable incidents for a project that required 17,000 man-hours. These results were due to the owner's approval to utilize engineer-procure-construct (EPC) project delivery, a proven method for gaining project efficiencies.

"This project had a myriad of challenges and required more than straightforward abatement services," says Kristen Campbell, sustainability manager, Sprague Massachusetts Properties LLC. "ESS first had to evaluate the significant number of risks at the site, ranging from unsafe structural conditions to the presence of many hazardous substances to the lack of power and water service to a pending hurricane

season. This was a remarkable engineering, construction, planning and permitting effort that has resulted in restoration of a significant community asset.”

Due to the unusual scope of the project and the building’s listing on the National Register of Historic Places, permitting and approvals required extensive coordination with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection as well as other city and state agencies. The primary goal was to avoid any reconstruction that would change the building’s exterior appearance. That required special efforts, including steps to camouflage broken or missing windows and repair missing sections of brick exterior walls.

Before any abatement of hazardous materials could begin, significant preparatory work was required to make the building safe enough for workers to enter. This included demolition of some interior areas followed by engineering and reconstruction of the collapsed roof section and installation of missing stairways and unsound mezzanine areas.

Access remained a challenge for the duration of the project, due to the unreliable condition of stairways and mezzanines and partially collapsed roof. The solution was to use a crane and articulated boom with six-story reach, along with hydraulic lifts, to move people and materials on the inside and outside of the building. The solution and health and safety plan were put to the test when Hurricane Jose struck the New England coast in 2017. While work was temporarily stopped months before the project was scheduled to be complete, the team wasn’t stopped from meeting the deadline.

“It was an honor to help Sprague Massachusetts Properties LLC restore the safety and structure of this historic community landmark,” says [Scott Cormier](#), regional [Environmental Services](#) manager for Burns & McDonnell. “By taking an EPC approach, we were able to bring together the entire project team, starting on day one, to find comprehensive solutions for the wide range of challenges we faced.”

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