

WJE Engineers and Architects Use Rope Climbing Techniques To Analyze Structures Nationwide

Chicago, IL (July 7, 2009) — High-rise structures throughout the country require periodic inspections to ensure their structural reliability. Building inspectors use swing stages, aerial lifts, and scaffolding, but these devices often times do not enable close enough inspection. As a result, WJE's Difficult Access Team (DAT) is often called upon to use rappelling, climbing, and synthetic ropes to approach these hard-to-reach locations to assess exterior maintenance needs.

WJE DAT members use industrial rope access techniques to analyze exterior building facades and other structures such as bridges. "The ropes definitely allow you to be more efficient in the field," said WJE Senior Associate Wade Clarke. Rope access techniques enable fewer personnel on job sites, a faster job completion, and less equipment all of which helps reduce project costs.

Training is important. Since its beginning in 1989, WJE's DAT has used an internal three-level ranking system to characterize the expertise of its team members. Level one personnel move up to level two only after having completed one hundred hours of industrial rope access training and jobsite inspections. Personnel must also be capable of inspecting equipment and have a familiarity with general rigging and self-rescue techniques. Level three employees have regular and long-term involvement on DAT projects and are aware of all aspects of difficult access procedures and equipment.

In 2007, WJE DAT members adopted equipment and procedures in conformance with guidelines set forth by the Society of Professional Rope Access Technicians (SPRAT). SPRAT dedicates itself to implementing certification programs, regulatory support, networking, and opportunities to participate in developing industry-consensus standards. WJE's DAT now has seven SPRAT-certified team members.

"It's one of the things that are routinely done most safely at WJE. That's because we have full control over our safety practices and rigging. It's a good team of experienced, appropriately safety conscious individuals that employ good safety practices," said WJE manager of safety and associate principal Lee Farrell.

About WJE

Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc., (WJE) is an interdisciplinary firm of architects, structural engineers, and materials scientists that specializes in the investigation, analysis, testing, and design of repairs for historic and contemporary structures. WJE focuses on delivering practical, innovative, and technically sound solutions across all areas of construction technology. Since the firm's founding more than fifty years ago, WJE specialists bring the collective experience gained from conducting more than seventy-five thousand investigations worldwide to every construction challenge. WJE combines state-of-the-art laboratory and testing facilities, nationwide offices, and knowledge sharing systems to provide solutions for the built world. For more information, please visit wje.com.

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