

Local

No alarm — it's a simulation

Streets get 200 mph winds

A 200 mph wind whipping rough downtown streets might initially be alarming, but it's all the name of science at Texas A&M University, where skyscrapers are measured in inches, not feet, and the wind comes from the

propeller of a World War II bomber.

The high winds generated from a B-29 propeller are blown across miniature cities to give Texas A&M researchers information on how proposed buildings will fare against the blustery forces of the Southwest.

Entire downtown sections of Dallas, Houston, Tulsa and other cities have been recreated in the wind tunnel laboratories of the Texas Engineering Experiment

Station, a research arm of the university system.

The scale-model cities are placed on a rotating pad inside TEES' largest wind tunnel where they are subjected to winds from every direction. Sensors inside the test building transmit information to a bank of computers nearby.

In a recent project, researchers tested the Continental Center, a 39-story office building scheduled for construction next year in down-

town Houston. Hundreds of sensors placed inside a specially designed mock-up of the proposed building took readings as winds were pulled across a 25-block area of downtown Houston.

Similar tests also were conducted prior to construction of Dallas' Reunion Tower.

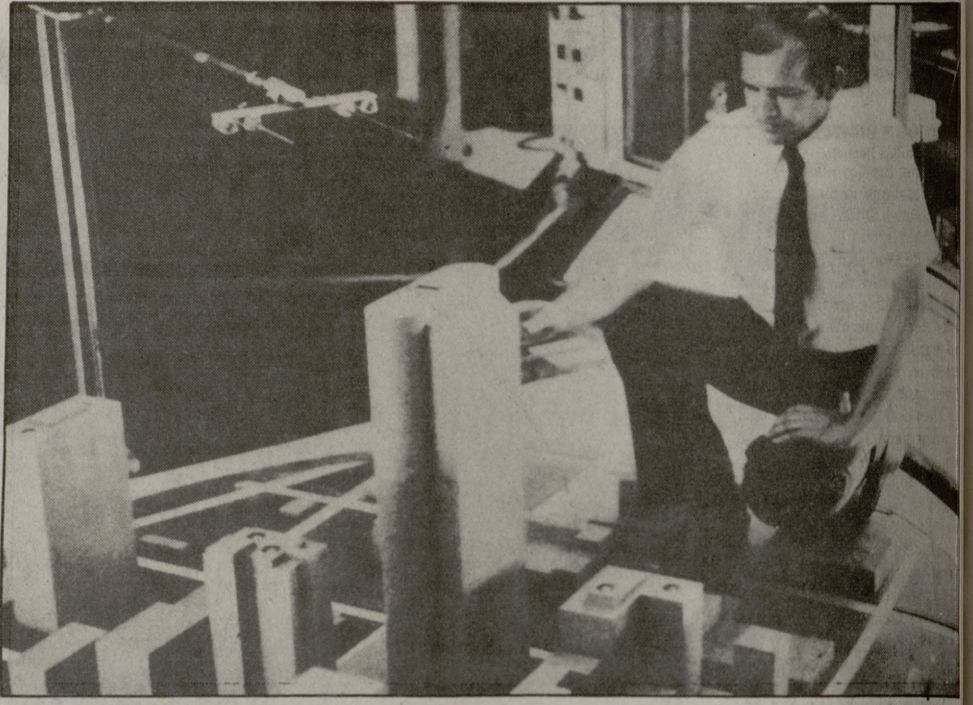
Dr. Dave Norton, an aerospace engineering professor who leads the project, said wind tunnel testing is a growing practice for proposed multi-story buildings and unusually shaped structures. Data gathered by Norton and TEES engineers is given to architects and structural engineers involved in a building's construction.

"We don't tell our clients what to build," Norton said. "But we do give them a lot of information, and from that engineers do such things as increase or decrease strength of winds."

"Construction is so expensive today that builders are looking for every possible edge. With our data, they can decide, for instance, what thickness of glass is needed on each floor. Glass alone can be very expensive."

Before actual testing, Norton and research engineer John Ribbe physically walk almost every square foot of ground to be included in the models. They must find heights of each existing building and check city maps for accuracy to be sure no buildings have been erected or torn down since the mapping.

In College Station, technicians for TEES' Environmental Aerodynamics Laboratory build



Dr. Dave Norton, director of the Environmental Aerodynamics Laboratory, checks a building model used in wind tunnel tests. The photo was taken over the summer.

the model, using wood and Styrofoam for all but the test building. The test building is constructed of aluminum. When complete, the model represents an accurate three-dimensional view of the city.

Tests simulate storms that

might occur once every 50 to 100 years. Wind in the tunnel is sucked past the model instead of blown because it allows more accurate measurements, Norton said.

Because of the growing interest in wind engineering, Norton has designed a new wind tunnel that

currently is under construction at the university's research center near Bryan. The new tunnel will better simulate the Earth's atmosphere and be more specifically constructed for testing of buildings and offshore platforms.

TEES to host conference for project researchers

By SHERYLON JENKINS
Battalion Reporter

The Texas Engineering Experiment Station Thursday will hold a research conference on the Texas A&M University campus to discuss recent TEES research projects.

Researchers will present 40 technical papers dealing with topics such as reduced fuel consumption, aerial photographic analysis of coastal regions and potential for treating domestic wastewater for reuse.

Dr. Jane Armstrong, assistant to the TEES director, said the goal of the conference is to bring together people to share their ideas and their resources.

"Too often we get in our own little offices and we're all working like little rats and nobody knows

what's being done next door to us," she said.

Texas A&M Regent Joe C. Richardson Jr. will be the keynote speaker for the conference. His topic will be "Create or Crater."

Richardson, Class of '49, is an independent oil and gas producer in Amarillo. He earned his bachelor's degree in petroleum engineering.

Prior to serving on the Board of Regents, Richardson was appointed by Gov. Bill Clements to the Interstate Oil Compact Commission. Richardson also has served on boards of directors for the R.L. Burns Corp. of Indiana, Consolidated Oil and Gas Inc. of Denver and the Corporate Systems Corp. of Amarillo.

The 40 technical papers to be presented were selected through a process that began with invitations to researchers.

Armstrong said letters were sent out to everyone in the College of Engineering and to all TEES employees, inviting them to send abstracts of completed research and research in progress to be reviewed by the program committee. Of the 55 papers received, Armstrong said, 40 were chosen on the basis of general interest to engineering research faculty.

Topics have been grouped into two three-hour slots. Topics scheduled for the period between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. are: transportation-related research, fluid mechanics, materials I and thermal physical processes. Between 2-5 p.m. papers on remote sensing, modeling and control, materials 2 and transport processes will be presented.

Some of the researchers, Armstrong said, are coming from places as close to College Station as Galveston and Prairie View and as far as Portland, Oregon.

August 1980 was the first time the conference was held. Armstrong named several improvements that have been made for this year's conference. One such improvement is an increase in the number of papers to be discussed — 40 as opposed to last year's 15. Also, the conference will last an entire day as opposed to last year's half-day conference.

Students, faculty and staff may attend the conference free. However, there is a registration fee of \$25 for all others. Registration is from 1-5 p.m. Wednesday on the second floor of Rudder Tower.

A social hour will begin at 6 p.m. and a barbecue is scheduled for 7 p.m. Both events will be at the Wofford Cain Pool.

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