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# Comprehensive Safety Strategies and Innovations for Infrastructure Resilience in Bridges

Daniel Chung[1] and Steven Klass[#]

[1]Paramus High School, USA
[#]Advisor

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the critical elements of ensuring bridge safety, covering design, construction, maintenance, personal protective equipment (PPE), community engagement, and public perception. It draws lessons from historical bridge failures, like the Morandi Bridge collapse, highlighting the necessity for stringent safety protocols in infrastructure development. Innovative solutions, such as heating systems to prevent ice formation and seismic resilient designs, are explored to address maintenance challenges and environmental impacts. In addition, the study also examines the role of public perception, education, and community engagement in bridge safety. It discusses the positive and negative aspects of safety measures like nets and Fall Protection Systems (FPS) and evaluates the impact of public education programs on safety awareness. Visual standards, clear signage, and innovations in bridge design, such as smart sensors and self-healing materials, are explored for their contributions to safety and longevity. A comparative analysis of safety standards worldwide, such as AASHTO, BSI, CSA, Austroad, Eurocodes, JRA, TB, IRC, ABNT, and SANS, highlights global efforts to establish consistent safety measures. Historical data and case studies, including the Tacoma Bridge Collapse and the Minneapolis I-35W Collapse, provide insights into safety measures' evolution. In conclusion, there is a need for a comprehensive approach to bridge safety, on the backend by implementing policies and ensuring safety protocols are being met, as well as a good public perception using visual components, like safety nets. Success hinges on collaborative efforts, robust risk reduction, and fostering public confidence in infrastructure development.

## Introduction

Throughout centuries bridges have been a vital part of the infrastructure of the human race. The ability to connect land over bodies of water or to make traveling easier; bridges have been able to connect society as a whole. However, beneath their majestic façades lies a precarious reality: bridge safety is not guaranteed. Over the years catastrophic failures happened and are bound to happen in the future as well. These catastrophic failures have underscored the imperative safety measures in bridge design, construction, and maintenance. In many scenarios understanding the landscape of bridges is paramount, not only does it prevent the loss of life and economic disruption it also upholds the public's trust in infrastructure.

Some bridge failures stand out for their impact, both in terms of lives lost and lessons learned. The collapse of the Morandi Bridge in Genoa, Italy, in August 2018, stands as a prime example. The catastrophic failure claimed 43 lives and left a community in despair. Investigations revealed a series of factors, including inadequate maintenance, design flaws, and corrosion, highlighting the need for comprehensive safety protocols. Similarly, the Hyatt Regency walkway collapse in Kansas City in 1981, though not a traditional bridge, resulted in 114 fatalities and highlighted the importance of rigorous quality control in construction. Construction itself is also not immune to calamity. The collapse of the Quebec Bridge in 1907, while still in its initial phase, claimed 75 lives of workers and stands as one of the deadliest construction accidents in history. Flawed calculations and insufficient quality were identified as the cause of these events. These incidents underscore the importance of oversight and adherence to safety protocols at every stage of bridge development.

Signifying the emphasis on bridge safety extends beyond natural disasters; it is a matter of safeguarding lives, livelihoods, and public trust. Humanity relies on bridges as they are the main link to traversing terrain. The compromisation of these links will lead to not only the physical well-being of humans but also the economic stability among countries. A single flaw can lead to trust being broken among communities and the government. Therefore, prioritizing bridge safety is not only a moral imperative but also a pragmatic necessity for fostering resilience and preserving public trust in critical infrastructure.

## Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment is an essential aspect of the safety of workers. Many environments during bridge construction create risks and threats to construction workers. Issues such as mechanical, chemical, physical, and Ergonomic Hazards are always faced on the field. Protective Equipment allows workers to be able to work in harsher conditions without having to worry about the risk of serious injuries. PPE comes in 5 major sections: feet, hands, chest, head, and eyes. These 5 sections are the most recurring incidents that happen during construction work and renovations. Footwear is essential for construction work to avoid crushed feet, cuts, and electrical shocks. Companies like RockFall create essential footwear that provides steel-toed shoes for workers. Gloves are also a major piece of equipment during labor work. Gloves protect hands from injuries, and exposure to skin contact from chemicals, heat, cold, abrasive, and cutting objects. Protection towards the chest is one of the most crucial parts of PPE as many vital organs such as the heart, lungs, stomach, liver, etc are located in the torso of the human body. Protective Equipment such as guardian protection vests allow workers to be easily spotted alongside the allowance of harnesses for Fall Protection Systems. Eyes and headwear are another vital section of the PPE system. Headwear such as helmets provide significant protection to the head and eyes. "84% of construction workers who experience head injuries do not wear helmets on site. 50% do not know when the time of impact will happen as they are usually looking towards the floor." (Cadieux, 2018)

Throughout its history, PPE has evolved from a pair of gloves to a full-body cover. During the 1930s OSHA made it mandatory to wear a "Hard-Boiled Hat" which was made out of steamed canvas, glue, and black paint. Throughout the years the hats have evolved into the currently known HDPE(high-density polyethylene) helmets. These helmets must meet ANSI Standard Z89.1-1986 (Protective Headgear for Industrial Workers). "While more than 2,200 construction workers died of such causes between 2003 and 2010, fatalities fell by an average of 6.2% each year." (Head Injuries on Construction Sites: The Risks & Prevention | HHV, n.d.).TBIs (Traumatic Brain Injuries) have been proven to be dropped after such equipment was provided to workers. With newer helmets using newly developed high-density polyethylene, it is "Flexible, translucent/waxy, weatherproof, good low-temperature toughness (to -60'C), easy to process by most methods, low cost, good chemical resistance." (Federation, n.d.-b) This material allows it to be worn during both extremes in the winter and the summer. With a tensile strength of up to 0.4N/mm2, this material is easily flexible and durable for workers. "More than half of construction-related TBIs occurred during falls—often from a ladder, scaffold, or roof." (Head Injuries on Construction Sites: The Risks & Prevention | HHV, n.d.). Falls can be prevented by wearing full-body PPE or the usage of a Fall Protection System. Both implementations have been placed to prevent falls and injuries to workers throughout projects.

Hearing Protection has also been proven to be a necessity in the workforce. In 1981, OSHA implemented new requirements for hearing protection in the workforce. "The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 22 million workers are exposed to potentially damaging noise at work each year." (Occupational Noise Exposure - Overview | Occupational Safety and Health Administration, n.d.) Exposure to noises that may damage hearing not only is permanent but also mentally hurts individuals as well. A study from Hopkin Medical

Institute discusses the potential threats to hearing damage. “In a study that tracked 639 adults for nearly 12 years, Johns Hopkins expert Frank Lin, M.D., Ph.D., and his colleagues found that mild hearing loss doubled dementia risk. Moderate loss tripled risk, and people with severe hearing impairment were five times more likely to develop dementia.” (The Hidden Risks of Hearing Loss, 2022) With certain damages like this, the life expectancy of people will drop significantly. OSHA also states “OSHA requires employers to implement a hearing conservation program when noise exposure is at or above 85 decibels averaged over 8 working hours, or an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA).” (Occupational Noise Exposure - Overview | Occupational Safety and Health Administration, n.d.) Hearing loss also may lead to social isolation. Social isolation can be caused by not wanting to interact with others much anymore which is a leading cause of dementia. With such breakthroughs of major effects of hearing damage that can be caused on construction sites of bridges, PPE has proven to become a major factor in bridge safety.

## Maintenance Strategies and Environmental Impact

All bridges require multiple maintenance checks throughout the years to guarantee that the structural integrity and safety of bridges are stable to create a nonhazardous zone for pedestrians. Some events that affect bridges are corrosion, rain and humidity, freezing conditions, thermal expansion and contractions, high winds, heavy rainfall, earthquakes, sun exposure, etc. Conditions that are below Freezing Temp, 0 Celsius, create ice on the structure adding weight and weakening the overall structure's balance and stability. “The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reports that more than 1,300 people are killed, and more than 116,000 people are injured in snow, ice, or slush-related auto accidents each year.” (Offices, 2023) Over 13% of road accidents caused are from snow, ice, or slush. Research has been conducted to determine why bridges ice faster than roads. The major reason for the freezing of bridges is that there is only one available source of cold air, directly above the bridge. This causes the bridge to freeze faster as the bridge itself cannot trap heat.

At first many thought to use salt to prevent the bridges from freezing. However, this method requires extensive manpower. The usage of salt can also be damaging to the infrastructure of the bridge as well. An alternative measure was heating systems. Using pipes that run across the bridges providing 10-15C has proven to be effective. As a bridge cannot be insulated as well as basic roads and highways a heating system has been implemented. “Hydronic heating systems are one of the most popular types of heating systems because of their environmentally friendly heat source.”(Chen et al., 2020). The Kemi-Tornio Bridge located in Finland has been a clear example of the extraordinary results of this innovation. Such Innovation allowed the bridge to withstand the harsh weather of Finland and was also an eco-friendly design.

Natural Disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis play a very significant role in the improvisations of bridges. The Great San Francisco earthquake of 1906, with a magnitude “estimated at 7.9, but values up to 8.25 have been proposed” (The Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 | California Academy of Sciences, n.d.), collapsed one of the most well-known bridges to date, the golden gate bridge. “Two retrofit strategies have been used recently on the Bridge: (1) making some key elements stronger, and (2) using seismic isolators on approaches to the Bridge to reduce the earthquake motions that they experience.” (Seismic Isolation - Exhibits Area 3 | Golden Gate, n.d.). Seismic isolators absorb and dissipate the energy generated by an earthquake, reducing the transmission of seismic forces to the bridge. Such reductions allow the bridge itself to remain stable. The San Francisco earthquake caused the death of 3,000 people ranging over 296 miles leaving 200,000 homeless. Such prevention of natural disasters is crucial for the safety and life expectancy of both people and bridges. Tsunamis are a possible effect of earthquakes as well. In 2011 a major tsunami hit Japan damaging 122,000 buildings, 71 bridges, and 18,000 people killed. In response, the Japanese government implemented new methods to prevent more destruction from natural disasters. Early Warning Systems (EWS), and Higher Elevation and Strengthening. “Bridges which were built in the early
days were generally vulnerable to tsunami effects since the connection of spans to substructures was weak.

Bridges which were taller than tsunami waves did not suffer damage." (Damage of Road Bridges by 2011 Great East Japan, 2011). The strengthening of bridges relies on reinforcements such as CFRP (carbon fiber reinforced polymers), Bonded Steel Plates, and Prestressing FRP. One common method involves applying CFRP strips or sheets externally to the surface of concrete bridge elements, such as beams, columns, or slabs. These methods reinforce the structure itself, bonding the concrete together using straps to create a strong base for the bridge itself.

## Public Perception, Education, and Community Engagement

Public perception plays a significant role in how a bridge is viewed and discussed throughout its construction period and after. Safety nets have both positive and negative perceptions through different people. Positive perception of safety nets prevents suicides and also protects workers from environments that may threaten or harm the life of a laborist. Negative perception, however, discusses the appeal of others. When looking at these nets it can create a sense of unease to one and physiologically toll them as well. Although Public Perception may vary depending on the person, a major agreed topic would be Fall Protection Systems(FPS) have been in discussion in many different modern construction sites. FPS provides workers with a harness allowing one to be able to conquer the risk of falling as this machine provides safety to workers on site. "The body belt was one of the earliest versions of a personal fall arrest system, inspired by similar equipment worn by rock climbers." (Fabenco, 2022). FPS' main purpose was to create an improved safety, efficiency, and productivity device allowing bridge work to be easier as wearable technology is created. OSHA states that "90% of fatal falls occur when fall systems are not in place. In 2020/21, there were 39 fatal injuries to workers and 4 to members of the public in the construction and scaffolding sectors" (OSHA) Although FPS systems have provided a great benefit towards workers there has always been a constant debate on whether it was necessary. Many companies have deemed it to be too expensive and efficient to deploy these devices as it would take a certain amount of time to put these devices into place. This has been a constant topic of discussion throughout major construction companies. Although being started in the early 1920s, it was not required by OSHA till 1994. Throughout the 80s and 90s, OSHA required fall protection to be set in place for anything above 6 feet( 182.22cm), now it is required to be 4 feet(121.92cm) above the ground.

Although public perception can be viewed negatively at times there are ways to sway these opinions to a certain side. Public education and awareness programs such as Safety Takes Training provide in-depth seminars and discussions to educate and notify people of the constant hazards around road safety. Media outreach programs and public service announcements (PSAs) allow people to be informed in a quick and timely manner about the key safety practices one must do. Bridges that are viewed as a symbol of connectivity and safety impact the public's attitude positively. After the 2011 Tsunami in Japan, multiple safety seminars and outreach programs started. These programs informed the public what to do and how to react in certain scenarios. "The International Rescue Committee responded by providing technical and financial support to three Japanese aid groups—the Association for Aid and Relief Japan (AAR), Japan Emergency NGO (JEN) and Peace Winds Japan." (Irc, 2016). Certain communities provided and aided multiple programs as well.

Visual Standards on bridges are a key priority that takes place to present a safe and protected environment to the public. A well-maintained appearance conveys a sense of care and attention to the details alongside reassuring the public that the bridge is monitored and safe. Another major influence on visual perception is clear signage and markings. The ability to provide clear and visible signage and markings allows people to easily understand the limits of the bridge such as weight limit, emergency procedures, and speed limit to maintain order and safety on bridges. Lightning enhances visibility during nighttime or adverse weather, reducing the feeling of uncertainty and enhancing the perception of safety. Aesthetically pleasing designs create a positive impact as it generates a sense of pride and confidence. Other factors such as transparent design elements, surrounding landscape and scenery, colors and contrast, etc, provide a sense of security and safety.

## Innovation in Bridge Design

Visual Standards on bridges are a key priority that takes place to present a safe and protected environment to the public. A well-maintained appearance conveys a sense of care and attention to the details alongside reassuring the public that the bridge is monitored and safe. Another major influence on visual perception is clear signage and markings. The ability to provide clear and visible signage and markings allows people to easily understand the limits of the bridge such as weight limit, emergency procedures, and speed limit to maintain order and safety on bridges. Lightning enhances visibility during nighttime or adverse weather, reducing the feeling of uncertainty and enhancing the perception of safety. Aesthetically pleasing designs create a positive impact as it generates a sense of pride and confidence. Other factors such as transparent design elements, surrounding landscape and scenery, colors and contrast, etc, provide a sense of security and safety. Although visual standards are a new standard in the engineering industry it has become a key priority that many have taken. Ultimately, a test was done to see how people would react when given 2 bridges around 5 miles apart. When looking at the bridge that they first approached that looked worn down and older, many people took the 5-mile detour to take the more aesthetic bridge.

Advancements in the engineering field have created new improvisations to ensure the safety of bridges resulting in a stronger and more stable design. Innovations such as Smart Sensors and Monitoring systems that monitor structural health allow engineers to have early detection of anomalies and potential issues that can arise. “Structural health monitoring of bridges clarifies which repairs need to be prioritized,” says IEEE Senior Member Clint Andrews. “The deferred maintenance backlog has become so severe that it is easy to just throw up your hands and invest opportunistically in repairs, but the proper way is to prioritize based on the timely status information.” Using such information to prioritize certain sectors promptly creates the ability to detect weaknesses instantaneously. “While sensors are being used to detect early warnings of a catastrophic structural failure, they are also gathering important data about necessary structural repairs after a natural weather event like an earthquake or hurricane.” (Cocian, 2022).

Another major innovation created in the 21st century is the creation of self-healing material. This equipment allows the lifespan of bridges to last longer. Self-healing concrete, a major product that has been created has been proven to be efficient in filling in cracks from corrosion. “To maintain and repair the EU's 1.1 million bridges alone requires an estimated budget of €4-6 billion every year while replacing them could cost more than €400 billion.” (Buildings, Tunnels, and Bridges Could Soon Repair Themselves, 2021) With costs exceeding €400 billion, such innovations could save up to 120 million euros yearly per country.

Innovations such as climate-resilient infrastructures, seismic resilient designs, energy harvesting systems, etc all adapt and use the environment to create a safe structure. The climate-resilient infrastructure allows structures to adapt to extreme weather conditions such as storms, or rising sea levels for coastal bridges. Seismic resilient designs provide adaptations to the structure of the bridge during earthquakes and other disasters nearby. Using energy harvesting systems such as solar panels allows the generation of energy for other systems that are put into place.

These adaptations have proven to expand bridge life extensively. The Golden Gate Bridge, a bridge known throughout the world, has been standing for 87 years. The structure was created using steel wires in the concrete creating its strong support base. The major weakness of the bridge is the lack of protection against concrete corrosion. Additionally, these new inventions have allowed not only bridges to expand lifespan but also the safety of drivers as well. Driver safety has been a major concern to society. Over 8% of most accidents happen on bridges, and over 15,000 accidents yearly. Most accidents are caused by drunk driving, or drug usage as people are unaware of their surroundings while driving on a bridge. These preventions cannot be made with innovative technology but more of a social awareness program that can educate drivers and pedestrians on the effects of drunk driving and drug usage. A way that engineers have tried to prevent these incidents is Adaptive

Traffic Management Systems which limit the amount of people who are on the bridge at any given time. These systems would allow drivers to be more aware of their surroundings while driving. "One study of crash data from 2011 to 2018 on five corridors found that adaptive signal control technology, which is designed to keep traffic flowing smoothly, led to a reduction in crashes of about 5 percent." (Intelligent Transportation Systems: Benefits Related to Traffic Congestion and Safety Can Be Limited by Various Factors, n.d.) A reduction of 5% would be over one hundred thousand accidents being reduced. Over two million accidents happen yearly around 19,937 per day. Although this won't prevent drunk drivers and drug users in general it will limit the amount of accidents that happen on bridges with fewer cars on the road.

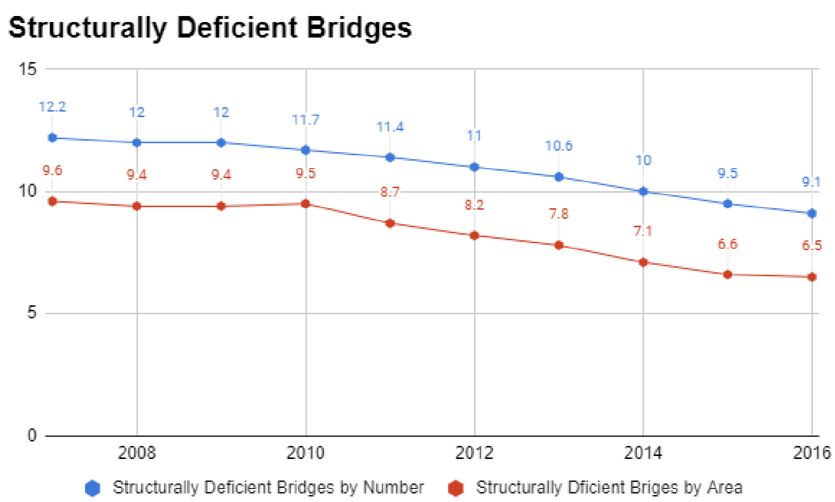


**Figure 1.** Structurally Deficient Bridges. Percentage of Structurally Deficient Bridges From 2007 to 2016

## Comparative Analysis of Safety Standards

Countries around the globe have set standards to follow when constructing and maintaining roadwork. These safety standards allow countries to prosper in safety and provide a secure environment on the road. Safety Standards in countries like AASHTO, BSI, CSA, Austroad, Eurocodes, JRA, TB, IRC, ABNT, SANS, etc, are all set in place to ensure the safety of both bridges and pedestrians using these structures. These systems are important for organizing and also ensuring that the construction of these bridges is structurally safe and to make sure that there were no attempts to cut down prices. Eurocodes for example uses different codes to ensure the safety and serviceability and also the usage of steel structures in some bridges in the European countries in the EU (European Union).

Different countries provide different regulations based on the customs and regulations of the locals. Some countries drive on the left lane. Although these vary all over the world, these regulations are always set to ensure the safety of drivers. Technological advancements have been made throughout the world such as nanotech, self-healing equipment, Fall Protection Systems, Monitoring Systems, etc. All these equipment have provided reliable and safer bridges all around the world allowing countries to prosper in development and safety. Equipment like these increase the life expectancy of bridges as well.

Thirty-six percent of all road injuries/collisions are caused by intersections. Preventing these collisions in v5 of the Transportation Research Board they have deemed that the reason for most incidents are caused by the drivers' lack of awareness. "Some intersection-related collisions occur because one or more drivers approaching an intersection are unaware of the intersection until it is too late to avoid a collision" (AASHTO, 16)

The implementations that have been discussed were light installations after determining most causes were from high-speed uncontrolled approaches toward intersections. Light installations would help drivers be warned that the intersection is closed. Another major improvisation was rumble strips which would grab the attention of drivers after driving over these strips.

AASHTO has done multiple different tests for the prevention of intersection-related collisions throughout the years. Exhibit V-19 “Strategy Attributes for Closing and Relocating High-Risk Intersections (T)” mainly focused on why improvisation strategies have not affected intersections with high levels of collisions. The effectiveness of these was caused by moving the intersections to different locations. These intersections, although proving effective if moved, also caused different complications. Diverted traffic may cause safety problems on alternative routes because of the removal of the intersection.

All standards from countries are based around each other using different innovations from different countries to develop the safest and most efficient roads and bridges nationwide. These innovations allow countries to prosper and allow drivers and pedestrians to be safe. AASHTO, BSI, and CSA all provide specific safety measures for bridges and intersections, all having tests on how to make the roads safer and efficient for drivers.

## Historical Data, Case Studies

These major improvements to bridge safety were the result of many past experiences. Historical Data shows that bridges had to develop more safety precautions such as aerodynamic and inspection protocols. The Tacoma Bridge Collapse of 1940 resulted in the research of aerodynamics in bridges itself. These improvements allowed engineers to redesign these bridges to be safer to national road standards. The Minneapolis I-35W Collapse (2007) resulted in better safety precautions and mandatory inspections. Providing a more reliable way to ensure bridge infrastructure is stable and does not endanger public safety. The Golden Gate Bridge has made significant innovations in public safety. The GGB is ranked 2nd in the most suicides in the world to the current date. These extreme numbers created the usage of Safety Nets, and taller fencing to provide safety to those who are suicidal. Such precautions prevented many suicides in recent years. Not only safety nets are provided to be sufficient to prevent deaths.

Another major innovation is the usage of social media. Alerting those online and informing new drivers on maintaining safety on bridges have been highly effective. The usage of social media provides fast and direct posts that reach a certain audience almost instantly. “One of the most significant benefits of social media in promoting workplace safety is its ability to facilitate rapid information sharing. In the past, disseminating crucial safety information could be time-consuming and inefficient.” (Editor, 2023). The ability to forward messages to others instantly with warnings or notices allows workers to be alerted if there are certain hazards in certain areas. “Social media has enabled organizations to launch safety campaigns and challenges.” (Editor, 2023). “Safety awareness campaigns aim to educate employees about the potential hazards they may face in the workplace.” (SHEilds Ltd, 2024). As technology advanced in recent years many different organizations have risen to inform the public.

Historical events provide information and statistics that allow engineers to innovate and develop new equipment to provide safer infrastructure for bridges alongside stability and higher life spans for bridges. Such innovations as Smart Sensors and Monitoring Systems were put into place to monitor without needing maintenance checks regularly. These systems allow engineers to be able to respond to internal and external problems faster and with ease without going through extensive checks that may take up to weeks to do. Technological advancements that allow engineers to be able to pinpoint where the damage may occur save the number of resources used to search for these regions of damage. Adaptive Traffic Systems have also protected bridges as well. Being able to maintain the number of automotive vehicles on the bridge at a certain time.

## Conclusion

Improving bridge safety requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that addresses various aspects of construction, maintenance, community engagement, and design. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) stands as the structure and foundation to protect all workers in the hazardous work environment they experience. PPE protects workers from falls, impacts, and exposure to hazardous substances. Furthermore, effective maintenance strategies are an undisputed topic. Maintaining and controlling environmental impacts is a must for bridge safety. Inspection, corrosion control, and vegetation management must be performed to ensure structural integrity and minimize ecological disturbance. Additionally, public education campaigns, media outreach, and regular inspections play an important role in increasing safety awareness among pedestrians, drivers, and workers. Combining aesthetics with creative elements not only increases public perception but also contributes to a positive psychological sense of security that strengthens trust between these important structures. Finally, understanding and respecting the various safety standards among nations/regions, such as AASHTO, BSI, CSA, etc., ensures that safety measures are made to match local requirements and conditions, thereby promoting adaptability and consistency in response to various challenges.

Innovation in security strategies is important for all types of infrastructure because of changing risk situations, environmental issues, and community needs. Whether it's bridges, roads, buildings, or services, taking innovative safety measures ensures resilience when faced with emerging challenges. Security is needed throughout the community to be able to maintain a safe environment for those around. Innovative strategies like smart inspection systems, fall protection systems, vibration isolation, etc., are all used in different designs to provide safety. In the coming days, newer infrastructures may adapt to these current strategies to be able to create secure structures and systems that can be deployed. Most importantly, the success of these strategies depends on the concerted efforts of internal security protocols, strong risk reduction measures, and promoting public confidence. Finally, these joint efforts are necessary to ensure the proper and successful development of infrastructure that meets the needs of the community while protecting life, property, and the environment.

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