



2023 Women in Construction: Hongbo Wang, DeSimone Consulting Engineering

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In the past year, what project or accomplishment are you most proud of? As the most senior woman structural leader at DeSimone Consulting Engineering, I am proud of our work at 1841 Broadway, a 27-story residential tower in Manhattan. DeSimone is the engineer of record and façade consultant for the project, we also performed special inspection services for the reinforcing steel installation, concrete placement, and façade installation. Although we issued the superstructure bid set on February 28, 2020, the project cycle was not delayed because of COVID. We developed a hybrid workflow among the project team to efficiently deliver services throughout the pandemic. In the end, the structure topped out on schedule last June.

What is your favorite building in New York? Rockefeller Center. I find the story behind the building to be inspiring. The sprawling complex includes a 850-foot-tall building, and it was built during the Great Depression. I read that the construction of the project employed between 40,000 and 60,000 people, so the scale is incredible considering the economic situation at the time. As supertall building engineer, I take inspiration from this incredible project.

Which professional associations or organizations would you recommend to women who are starting out in the AEC industry? The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) is a great organization. ASCE is the nation's oldest engineering society. It has more than 143,000 members in 177 countries, so there are support networks that young women can access. There's also the Structural Engineers Association of New York (SEAoNY), which is a major local organization. It's worth mentioning that the current President and President-elect of ASCE and the President-Elect of SEAoNY are women.

What was a pivotal point in your career? In 2014, I had the opportunity to work on the 950-foot-tall, 69-story 220 Central Park South supertall residential complex. I appreciate that DeSimone has given me the opportunity, as an immigrant woman engineer, to be the Project Manager for that project. The structure incorporates perimeter moment frames with only four columns along the 128-foot-long north face. This structure supports a limestone curtain wall that creates open views of Central Park. Since then, I have gone on to become an experienced project manager with leadership and creative responsibilities. The project opened opportunities for me to work with major clients, talented architects, and other top consultants in the industry.

How can AEC companies recruit more women? Recent statistics show that women make up less than 20% of structural engineers. In order to develop or empower women in the industry, firms can consider: Make the gender diversity a top priority alongside racial, ethnic, and economic diversity and work toward bringing this diversity into the management levels, because diverse managers make a company more appealing for diverse candidates.