2026 WINNER

DPR CONSTRUCTION

Kellen Starr
U.S. Air Force Academy
Hosmer Visitor Center
Colorado Springs, CO

LPI

MOST INNOVATIVE DESIGN AWARD
Commercial / NEW BUILD

Lightning Rods Protecting Home & Business
Mr. Lightning
Est. 1969

DPR CONSTRUCTION



Photo Credit: Fred Fuhrmeister

Collaboration and Creativity Protect a Building Designed to Take Flight!

From historical structures to modern high rises, the design and implementation of a lightning protection system is a team effort.
The LPI wants to recognize those individuals and firms who work with our LPI Members to successfully design and integrate lightning protection systems into commercial and residential structures.

“Protecting” a Building Designed to Take Flight.

LPI Member Mr. Lightning
in Collaboration with DPR Construction.

As you approach Colorado Springs from the north, the silhouette of the new U.S. Air Force Academy Hosmer Visitor Center might be mistaken for a jet taking flight. Its four-tiered roof represents each year of Academy life, and the building anchors the TrueNorth Commons development just outside the Academy’s North Gate.

This year’s LPI Most Innovative Design Award showcases a general contractor and a lightning protection contractor coordinating every detail, from welds to roofing, to protect this landmark while honoring the architect’s “banked flight” look.



About the Hosmer Visitor Center

Part of the $340 million TrueNorth Commons development, construction began in July 2022 and the core and shell were complete by summer 2024. The project earned a 2024 ACEC Colorado Engineering Excellence Award.

The Building Design

More than an architectural marvel, the visitor center is a dynamic, immersive experience with artificial intelligence, exploratory learning, flight simulators and interactive exhibits, all beneath a roof that appears to bank into flight.

Four tiers, one for each year of Academy life, with tight radii and complex slopes.



Photo: Mr. Lightning

CHALLENGES

Steep, multi-pitch roof with tight radii and complex slopes

Simultaneous multi-lift activity that raised safety and routing constraints

Exothermic welds on wet steel columns, timed around concealed concrete finishes

Banked Flight

The architect wanted the air terminals to stay perpendicular to the angled roof planes, preserving the “banked flight” look of the four-tiered roof.



Photo Credit: Mr. Lightning.



Crews navigated steep roofing pitches and simultaneous multi-lift activity at heights up to 150 feet.



The Solution



Mr. Lightning (LPI member Bret Peifer) and DPR Construction, formerly GE Johnson Construction, planned sequencing, access and safety from the start. Kellen Starr brought communication, foresight and a deep understanding of lightning protection.

Details solved together: pre-heating exothermic welds on moisture-laden columns, scheduling bonds before the concrete "diamond" pours, photographing all-thread and air terminals so they were not lost during roofing, and moving test wells into planned flower beds.

The result: a discreet, code-compliant system.



Above: Shows the roughed in all-threads and air terminals before the roof was installed. Right: Illustrates how narrow and crowded the site was to install our ground loop/ counterpoise. The counterpoise tied the bottoms of the structural steel out to ground rods that were interconnected by 2/0 bare copper wire.

Photo Credits: Mr. Lightning

LIGHTNING PROTECTION INSTITUTE
INSPECTION PROGRAM

Inspection

No project is complete until it is inspected and certified. To ensure proper function, we recommend utilizing the Lightning Protection Institute – Inspection Program (LPI-IP), which is the most comprehensive 3rd party inspection program – solely for the lightning protection industry. **The Hosmer Visitor Center was inspected and certified by the LPI-IP.**

Collaboration

At the Lightning Protection Institute, we have seen the value of collaborating within our own industry as well as with other industries to create positive momentum and outcomes for everyone involved.

Have a challenge or a project that you want to work with us on? Contact the LPI at lpi@lighting.org or Find a Local Contractor at https://lightning.org/about/find-a-contractor/.

For More Information on the LPI Award winners:

DPR Construction

Kellen Starr
Colorado Springs, CO

In collaboration with LPI Member

Mr. Lightning

Lightning Protection Contractor
Colorado Springs, CO
LPI Member: Bret Peifer



Photo Credit: Fred Fuhrmeister

The Lightning Protection Institute (LPI) is a national organization that leads the way in establishing the highest standards and guidelines for the design, installation, and inspection of lightning protection systems.
https://lightning.org/