

Projects company blamed for hospital's roof collapse



Emergency services members work at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital in Johannesburg after a roof on the sixth floor near the entrance collapsed yesterday.

PHOTO: THULANI MBELE

Julia Madibo and Bongekile Macupe

THE Gauteng government has blamed a construction company for the collapse of the roof at the Charlotte Maxeke Hospital in Johannesburg yesterday afternoon.

The accident at the hospital's usually busy public entrance shook staff and patients but a tragedy was avoided as the authorities confirmed that only five people were injured.

MEC for infrastructure development Jacob Mamabolo said a company called Tanzanani Trading Enterprises was doing maintenance work on the roof when it collapsed.

"The contractor was appointed to do waterproofing. He said there were concrete stones on top which he needed to remove," Mamabolo said. He was speaking at a joint media briefing also attended by the Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi, health MEC Gwen Ramokgopa,

and premier David Makhura.

Mamabolo said the stones were moved to a side of the roof which was not meant to carry that kind of weight, leading to its collapse.

"We could see the contractor did not do a thorough check on the roof to see if it could carry the [concrete] stones. We don't think there was a preliminary check if the structure could carry that weight and that is why it collapsed."

Mamabolo said the construction company was immediately asked to leave the premises following the disaster.

Ramokgopa said all the people were treated and some were discharged last night.

"They were minor injuries and we have ascertained that," she said, adding that the hospital's functions

were back on track.

Meanwhile, a 68-year-old patient said he narrowly escaped injury as he had to turn back to fetch his hospital card he had forgotten with a doctor.

"As I was walking back to the doctor I heard a loud bang, and when I looked back I saw the structure collapsing... there was dust everywhere," Walter Makoro said.

He was worried about the fate of his four friends he had come to the hospital with.

Head of trauma at the hospital Dr Mayeni Moeng said all those who were rescued sustained soft tissue injuries that did not require surgery.

Gauteng DA health spokesman Jack Bloom said the hospital had long-standing maintenance crises which had been raised on many

occasions with the health department between 2014 and 2016 when he carried out random inspections at the hospital.

"I've seen leaking roofs at the oncology and X-ray departments. Even the staff there had been expressing concern over the condition of the building. At some stage the department promised to put aside R50-million to fix the problem, but this wasn't done."

Bloom urged the department to urgently assess the entire hospital.

Another patient, Jason-Lee Pitout, 16, said he was talking with nurses when the floor started vibrating and there was a loud noise. "I ran out before the collapse. This is so bad."

Staff members at the hospital said it was just a matter of time before the hospital collapsed.

"I sometimes think I will come here and won't find this place." - Additional reporting by Jan Bornman and Kgaugelo Masweneng

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