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Title: Report confirms warnings were ignored before George building collapse

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Report confirms warnings were ignored before George building collapse

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● This tragedy should never have happened, says minister

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A detailed investigation by the Council for the Built Environment has confirmed that critical safety concerns raised months before the catastrophic collapse of the 75 Victoria Street building in George were ignored — despite visible signs of structural failure.

Speaking at a media briefing at the Protea Hotel on Saturday, council CEO Misi Myeni presented the findings of a multidisciplinary team's technical report.

The report paints a disturbing picture of neglected warnings, substandard materials and widespread regulatory failures which led to the deaths of 34 people and left 28 others injured when the partially built structure collapsed on May 6 last year.

Myeni said workers had raised alarms long before the

collapse, reporting strange vibrations in the concrete slabs and even visible holes in the basement walls.

Two days before the incident, a contractor reportedly noticed significant building movement and roof slab vibrations.

Cracks resembling punch-through patterns appeared at the base of a column, and concerns were raised about narrow supporting columns and wide spans between them.

A subcontractor reportedly warned as early as 2023 that cracks in the basement were severe enough to see through. But instead of halting construction, the site manager had instructed that the cracks be patched with sand, cement and mortar.

The report found that the initial failure had occurred in the basement and ground-floor slabs, which collapsed under insufficient load-bearing

A health and safety agent had resigned during the project, saying it was impossible to protect workers amid ongoing violations

capacity. Concrete specified for the slabs should have had a strength of 19 to 25 megapascals, but only 13-megapascal concrete was delivered and used, Myeni said.

Moreover, a health and safety agent had resigned during the project, saying it was impossible to protect workers amid ongoing violations.

Geotechnical assessments had also been inadequate — groundwater in the basement area had been ignored, and essential data such as trial pit locations and DCP (Dynamic

Cone Penetrometer) test results were missing from the site's geotechnical report.

Inspectors from the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBCRC) were also found to have misrepresented the condition of the water-logged construction site.

Public works & infrastructure minister Dean Macpherson, who attended the briefing, condemned the failure of authorities and construction professionals to intervene despite multiple warnings.

"These were not minor oversights," Macpherson said. "They were systemic failures — failures of planning, oversight, enforcement and culture."

"At every red flag there was a chance to turn back, but the weak regulatory environment meant there was no incentive — or obligation — to do so."

The minister said he had promised survivors and the families of the victims that he



would personally deliver the report's findings.

"I felt it was important that they hear directly from me, not through the media or social media, why this tragedy happened."

Survivors of the collapse told the minister before the briefing that they continued to face challenges, with the department of labour allegedly failing to assist them adequately.

Some of the survivors had lost limbs and were unable to work, but were repeatedly turned away and told to return with documents.

The Engineering Council of SA (Ecsa) has charged a regis-

DEADLY INCIDENT: The findings of a multidisciplinary team's technical report on the George building collapse were presented at the weekend. Picture: WERNER HILLS

tered professional implicated in the collapse with five violations of the codes of conduct and practice.

These include failure to act with due care and diligence, endangering public safety and breaching multiple national laws and engineering standards.

The individual was found guilty on all charges, stripped of registration, fined the maximum permitted under the Adjustment of Fines Act, and referred for criminal investigation.

Ecsa confirmed that the respondent had misrepresented its professional competence and failed to adhere to engineering best practices.

Macpherson urged communities to rally around the victims and their families and emphasised that accountability must follow.

"This should never have happened," he said. "We owe it to the victims and their families to ensure it never happens again."