

Bethlehem is essentially supporting the demolition without investigating the health hazard (58)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Martin Tower, Serious Issues May 14, 2019

(58th in a series on Martin Tower)

Martin Tower demolition May 19

www.martintowerbethlehem.com

Dear Gadfly,

Your most recent questions [post #57] show a willingness to investigate a very difficult political environment. The city essentially is supporting the demolition without investigating the health hazard of demolition. They did have the City of Bethlehem Health Department at the meeting on Thursday, but they allowed the demolition company (who is in a conflict of interest) to answer health concerns. As I found during my questioning [at the May 9 night meeting], the responses were essentially deflections about our worry about long-term health problems. An argument with them would have mitigated the points, I tried to make. So let me answer some of your questions and responses the company gave to defend the implosion.

1. The amount of dust will be the same if mechanically taken down slowly vs. implosion.

This may or may not be true, but a slow release would not have the magnitude of silica load to the community outside the building. As you

questioned, most of the release would be experienced by the workers wearing masks in the building. On the other hand, the implosion would definitely increase the probability of the community to inhale silica since the dust will be outside the building. The mass of silica released all at once would increase the probability of inhalation to cause damage. Once the building is down, the processing of the remains will cause a constant stream of silica dust over a protracted time. If I were frequenting that area afterward, I would wear a mask. It is hard to understand how Lowe's would not understand that going to their store may cause a health hazard. Maybe their income will drop because of fear of dust contamination. How about all the medical office buildings? Patients with medical disabilities will also be encountering dust from the processing of the remains of Martin Tower.

2. People who work in the cement industry do not have lung problems.

There are multiple papers that refutes this statement. Obviously they either made up the answer from the experience of one person or it was meant to be an outright lie. An example of a paper referring to Portland Cement workers is: [Effect of Exposure to Cement Dust among the Workers: An Evaluation of Health Related Complications](#), published June 20, 2018. As you mentioned, these workers get chronic lung disease from inhalation of silica and lime. [Listen to the comment by resident #4 at the May 9 night meeting: post #56.]

3. Johns Hopkins used demolition as their choice, so why are we questioning the choice?

This statement does not explain if this decision was chosen by the physicians. The decision could have been for a small building away from the hospital. It could have been decided by the management without

physician support. So by name-dropping, they were putting up a smoke screen.

The one thing I do know. The cause and subsequent morbid effect is generally distant. The silica (and possible asbestos) acts as a foreign material that does not go away once inhaled. It stays in the lung. The body's response is to put fibrous tissue around the irritation. This takes many years. If there is little silica inhaled, the fibrous response may be focal. The residual lung tissue is enough for normal living. However, if there is much silica inhaled, it will effect enough lung tissue to compromise the transfer of oxygen from the alveolar sacs into the capillaries. This causes chronic lung disease. It also could lead to cancerous transformation.

I think the fact that the demolition company could not quote any medical studies after implosion is troubling. They cited a Philadelphia Study on measurements proximal to the implosion. There was no reference to where this information could be found.

I believe the City of Bethlehem has done a poor job in alleviating the problem we are confronting. I would like to know why the city allowed the implosion to occur. I believe the city is opening themselves to future law suits due to negligence once pulmonary diseases manifest themselves in the future.

Steven Diamond, DO, MBA

Forensic Pathologist