

# Hyatt regency hotel walkway collapse

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The Hyatt Regency Hotel Walkway Collapse was a disaster occurred on the 17th of July, 1981 in Kansas City, Missouri. The accident was told to result in 114 killed and more than 200 injured people during a tea dance. The hotel's construction began in 1978 and it was opened in 1980, July, because of construction delays. Hotel was famous for its distinguished lobby, a multistory atrium that was suspended by walkways on the other three floors. The second level walkway was directly followed by the fourth level walkway. (Stuart 1981)

On the 17th of July, 1981, disaster occurred. More than 2,000 people gathered in the atrium in order to take part in tea dance conquest. At 7:50 PM all the floors were packed with visitors willing to watch the active lobby. It is necessary to underline once more that the bridge of the fourth floor was suspended over the bridge of the second floor. It means that the walkway of the third floor was in several meters away from the other two floors. During hotel's constructions design changes were implemented and the load on the fourth floor walkway was doubled.

The fourth floor walkway was supported by the rods and beams to bear the weight of the second floor, that construction could hardly handle the load of the construction. In the result the connection failed and both two floor crashed and killed 114 people and injure more than 200 dancing in the lobby. (Marshall 1982) This disaster was claimed to be the second major disaster taken placed over the past two years. The first major was when Kemper arena collapsed, although it was empty at that time and nobody was killed.

The problem was with the design change that proved to be fatal.

Investigations found out that in the original design of the hotel the fourth floor beams and rods had only to support the fourth floor walkway, not to bear the whole load of the second floor. In the changed design the fourth floor beams had to suspend both the second and the fourth floor walkways. When the load was doubled on the fourth floor walkways, the proposed number of people admissible on the floor accounted only 30% of the “mandated minimum load”.

(Lerner 2000) The results of this disaster are the following. The engineers employed by Gillum and Associates were accused in gross negligence, unprofessional conduct and even misconduct in the engineering practice. In the result all of them have lost their engineering licenses in Texas and Missouri as well as the membership to ASCE. Gullim and Associates were accused in criminal negligence and their licenses were taken away as well; nowadays they have no rights to act as engineering firm.

It was mentioned that 114 people were killed and more than 200 were injured - \$140 million was awarded to victims' families in the subsequent lawsuits. Large sums of the money awarded were from Crown Center Corporation that owned the actual hotel franchise. The next moment to admit is that health and life insurance companies “absorbed even larger uncompensated losses in policy payouts”. It was concluded that the basic problem related to disaster was improper communication between Havens Steel and Gullim and Associates.

These were the main results of the disaster. (Interesting Engineering Event)  
In future after the disaster thereconstructionincluded fewer walkways which were strongly reinforced. In the result some of the hotel's floors have disconnected sections and it is necessary to exit different floor in order to enter the other side. Nowadays the hotel has been reopened and renamed Hyatt Regency Crown Centre. The hotel is renovated and is one of the most expensive, fashionable and luxurious hotels in USA.

( An Engineering Disaster) In conclusion it is necessary to outline that the Hyatt Hotel tragedy is a classic example for students being taught engineering errors and ethics. Nowadays chief engineer at Gillum is continuing to share his unpleasant experience with other engineers and engineering students, so that to avoid mistakes led to the disaster in future. Actually such disaster are remembered and recorded as the number of victims is too high. (Engineering Ethics)

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