



Fred Causer

No injuries were reported after the partial collapse of the Buoy Beer Co. building.

Collapse: The compromised building is a nearly 100-year-old cannery situated on aging pilings

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A natural gas leak was reported, prompting the temporary evacuation of the neighboring Bowline Hotel.

Fences were soon erected to keep people from the Astoria Riverwalk between Seventh and Eighth streets.

City Manager Brett Estes said Tuesday night that a building assessment to determine the structure's stability was being conducted.

The caved-in area had been closed off to employees and the public, according to Jessyka Dart-McLean, Buoy Beer's marketing manager.

"The structural issue was known," she said. "And so that part of the building was closed."

How the incident would affect the company's operations is unknown. "We are still working on figuring out what the next step is," Dart-McLean said in an email.

Buoy Beer CEO Luke Colvin told KMUN: "We're just starting to pick up the pieces."

The owners are working with their insurance company and have been asked to put booms in the water near the building to prevent debris from floating away, Astoria Fire Chief Dan Crutchfield said.

He said the owners, a structural engineer and the



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Beer cans float in the Columbia River after a partial collapse at Buoy Beer Co.

city will work together to look at potential causes and further actions.

"The city has an interest in making sure that that building becomes safer than it is now," he said.

Cans of beer and debris could be seen in the river after the collapse.

Jordan Lance, the former lead cook who worked at Buoy Beer until last year, was among the onlookers gathered at the Sixth Street pier.

"I'm sad, but not as sad as I am for friends who still work here, people who are thinking about jobs, payments, lifestyle," he said.

Mayor Bruce Jones said it was fortunate that there were no injuries or loss of life.

The compromised building is a nearly 100-year-old cannery situated on aging pilings. Through windows in the floor, patrons can watch

lolling sea lions.

In September, Buoy Beer closed the kitchen after discovering issues with the dock and pilings beneath.

"The Columbia River waters shift, and that's what we were battling against in that area," Dart-McLean said.

Founded in 2013, the company is one of the North Coast's largest breweries and has been expanding the waterfront campus into neighboring buildings over the past few years.

"Buoy Beer is a well-loved local employer and institution, and we hope they're able to move forward on some resolution on the building, and we'll be working with them in doing so," Jones said.

Abbey McDonald of The Astorian and Katie Frankowicz of KMUN contributed to this report.

Port: 'It looks like a waste of taxpayer dollars'

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Under state law, the owners and operators of contaminated facilities and property are responsible for the cleanup, as well as reimbursing the state for oversight costs to ensure projects are done in a way that protects public health and the environment.

The cleanup program's funding structure, modeled after the federal Superfund for polluted sites, covers the on-the-ground work and state regulatory agency oversight costs, Lauren Wirtis, a spokeswoman for the Department of Environmental Quality, said in an email.

Nina Deconcini, the administrator for the Department of Environmental Quality's northwest region, defended billing for the interview with The Astorian by highlighting the importance of communication between the government agency and the media.

"DEQ values the media's involvement very much with respect to correct information being disseminated to the public," she said during the meeting with Isom. "... That, to me, is an extremely good use of time because ... any time a news media or media story is published that has inaccurate information,

missing information, information taken out of context, it can dramatically affect the responsible parties, the government, the public's interpretation and I think all of us would agree, that we have a vested interest, collectively, in ensuring that accurate information is put forth."

Deconcini noted that billing the Port for media engagements occurred only a handful of times over the past few years.

"Every single responsible party, including the Port of Astoria, would be charged if a project manager, like Anna, had to be interviewed ... I consider this to be among the most important things we do from a transparency and an accountability perspective to make sure the public and other parties know what's going on," she said.

Isom was skeptical.

"Conceptually, you talk about transparency, it would be financially in the best interest of the Port, probably, for me to reach out to (The Astorian) after this and say, 'Hey, if you have a question about this project, don't reach out to DEQ. Go through me first so that we don't get billed and if we have to talk to DEQ, we can do it.' That doesn't seem very transparent, but it's in the financial interest of the Port," he said.

Isom also partially attributed the length of the AOC4 negotiations, which dragged on for over 20 years, to the cost recovery policy and the lack of incentives to wrap up.

Deconcini emphasized that as a government agency, the interest is in recovering costs commensurate with the state cleanup law, not to seek profit.

Up until the consent judgment was reached, the costs billed for the cleanup program were divided among the many parties who were deemed responsible for the contamination. Moving forward, with the consent judgment laying the remaining responsibility on the Port, the local agency will incur all of the charges.

"I understand the fact that from a legal perspective through Oregon statute, they may have the ability to charge for some of these things, but it doesn't make it right," Isom said. "I always try to look at these things through the eye test, and to me, this doesn't look right. It looks like poor government. It looks like a waste of taxpayer dollars."

"... Over time, these things add up and I think ultimately, there needs to be some reform to how DEQ, particularly this program, operates."

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Emergency responders have been made aware of the elevator outage as it may change how they respond to an emergency at the complex, Evans said.

Jane Wilson, who lives on the second floor of Owens-

Adair, told The Astorian last week that she was concerned about some of her neighbors walking up and down the stairs and accessing necessities like groceries.

Since then, she said members of her church have helped her get groceries into her apartment. She said Clat-

sop Community Action also came by and offered help.

The housing authority has arranged to pick up residents' trash, which she said has also been helpful.

"They are trying so I can't complain," Wilson said. "I guess we'll really appreciate our elevator when we get it back."

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