

SAFETY MATTERS

MAY/JUNE 2023

PREPARED FOR THE WORST

Demolition crew posts a success during a failure

The column supporting the decrepit former Mercy College parking garage was not supposed to fall onto Jefferson Avenue. Rather, the demolition crew's plan was for the high reach excavator to methodically and systematically "chomp" it down and alternate between columns and beams to maintain as much structural integrity as possible as they demolished the building.

But as the crew from demolition subcontractor Homrich went after the third column, it fell the wrong direction and into the street.

So how is this a safety success story?

While an Incident Review would later reveal that the building structure was far weaker than anticipated and the column was not sufficiently connected to the foundation, it also revealed that the crew suspected instability, stopped work, and closed off the street to pedestrians and traffic before resuming. That measure of caution was part of the original planning – and averted a potential catastrophe.

"There is always a possibility of an 'uncontrolled' collapse, especially as the demo nears completion. Our written demolition plan always contemplates unplanned collapses, and creates the



There is always the possibility of an uncontrolled collapse during demolition.

requisite safety zones accordingly," said RLI Project Manager **Rob Wissolik**. "While demolition is in progress, trained spotters paying careful attention actively monitor how the building is reacting to each movement. We always stop traffic or expand the safety zone whenever conditions change."

After the column collapse, the Homrich crew, RLI project and safety officials, representatives of the owner and a licensed structural engineer reassessed the demolition plans to account for the recently discovered instability. The team worked with the city to close off Jefferson Avenue for the duration of the project, which was successfully completed. Cables were added in another area of the project to prevent damage to an adjacent building.



Workers at many RLG job sites in May participated in OSHA's annual stand-down to review fall protection procedures. Falls remain the leading cause of fatalities in construction.

EYES ON SAFETY

Contact the paramedic right away if there's something in your eye

Paramedic **Deb Gacsal** has had a great deal of success at removing particles from eyes since her time at Project Aristotle, First Solar PGT-03 and now at RLG headquarters in Walbridge.

"She just does a really nice job with a lot of our people," GEM Operations Director **Bill Cornett** said. "If you have something in your eye, go to the clinic, and you are going to get good care."

Wearing PPE will not always prevent an eye injury, Gacsal said. A face shield when tipped up can dump particles in the eye. Wind can quickly whip up dust, dirt and small bits of construction materials.

"Wind is always going to be our adversary, never our friend," she said.

As soon as you get something in your eye and blinking does not immediately remove it, report it and go to the clinic.



Gacsal uses a blue-light visor to help illuminate the particle.

Gacsal uses a pH-balanced eye wash to flush the eye. A dye can illuminate the eye so she can use a blue-light visor to see the particle. If she cannot get it out, she can refer you to a medical facility for treatment.

A membrane can form around a particle, making it far more difficult to remove. When a metal particle is in the eye, a painful "rust ring" can form within four to six hours. She also warns workers not to flush their eyes with bottled water as it increases the risk of infection.



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TOOLS: REBAR CUTTERS ADD A MEASURE OF SAFETY

Two tools make clean cuts when the job can't be done at ground level

Cutting rebar when it isn't at ground level can be dangerous. When using a gas-powered Partner Saw, it can snap back just before going all the way through the material, fall, and the sharp edges can cause serious injury.

Two tools that RLI has in stock can lessen the injury risk: The Makita Rebar Cutter and the Milwaukee Portable Band Saw. Both are cordless and better options when the cut is not at ground level.

"The problem is you can't get a good handle on that rebar to hold it steady," said RLI Masonry General Superintendent **Don Brighton**. "It moves and bounces."

The rebar cutter and the portable band saw won't catch on the rebar like a Partner Saw can. Associates say the rebar cutter is particularly effective.

"What they're telling me is you can't force it. You can't apply a lot of pressure," Brighton said. "You have to let the blade do the work."

The Portable Band Saw will safely get through the rebar, too, he said.

"It's not as fast, but it cuts the rebar without catching and binding up," Brighton said.



The Makita Rebar Cutter is a much safer tool to use than a Partner Saw when cutting rebar that is not at ground level.

KUDOS FROM MSHA

Federal agency recognizes GEM's dedication to safety

Woodville – Mines and quarries are inspected by the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).

GEM associates recently spent many hours in safety classes because MSHA's recordkeeping and other requirements differ from OSHA.

MSHA recently visited the Martin Marietta Materials quarry. Multiple contractors were called in to discuss a variety of deficiencies.

GEM was not among them due to our associates' dedication to safety, proper recordkeeping and previous positive interactions with MSHA, which the agency mentioned during its visit.

THANK YOU FOR WORKING SAFELY

Work begins at Lake Elementary



Millbury – RLI brick masons lay the first course of perimeter block, left, while a carpenter and cement finisher work on piers at the Lake Elementary School construction site.

A MESSAGE FROM GEM'S STEVE JOHNSON AND RLI'S JEFF SCHALLER

Complacency regarding safety has no place at RLG

The last few years have been busy ones at all RLG companies. We are working some significant man hours and completing complex projects large and small. We thank you for the incredible effort you have made to ensure we provide our customers with the outstanding value that they have come to expect from our companies.

Our companies have a great safety culture. We take pride in knowing that we provide high-quality training, tools and equipment and constantly reinforce safety messages and requirements at our jobsites. We thank you for your dedication and personal

commitment to safety. Our safety programs work because of you.

Even a small uptick in safety incidents is of great concern. We cannot let our guard down. There is too much at stake. Being busy is not an excuse for

Ask yourself: Is this the safest way possible to complete my task? If you are unsure, stop work and reconsider the task.

foregoing or ignoring safety requirements. **Complacency regarding safety has no home at RLG – ever.**

Be mindful of what you are doing and how you are doing it. Ask yourself: Is this the safest way possible to complete my task?

If you are unsure, stop work and reconsider. Ask for advice.

Speak up immediately if you see a hazard or an at-risk behavior, even if it is not your task. Stand up for your coworker by reminding them about the safety requirements of the job. And if someone reminds you about safety requirements, take it in the spirit it is given: It is to make sure you return home at the end of your shift in the same condition as when you started work.

Your personal safety and that of your coworkers is our No. 1 value. Let's demonstrate our active and visible commitment to safety every day.