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## Scaffold collapse hurts three

Friday, June 17, 2005

By Ken Kolker

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Scaffolding collapsed along a downtown building early today, sending three workers at least 25 feet to the pavement.

The three men were taken by ambulance to Spectrum Health Butterworth Campus. At least one likely suffered multiple broken bones, Grand Rapids firefighters said.

"From that high, there could easily have been a death," said a work-crew supervisor on the scene.

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The men were among six crew members from Dave Bouwkamp Masonry, of Jenison, who were working on the south side of the Peninsular Club building, along Fountain Street near Ottawa Avenue NW.

They were peeling bricks from the building to open holes for large windows, said a supervisor for Wolverine Construction Co., which is overseeing the job.

The supervisor, who asked not to be identified, said the three were about three stories up just before 8 a.m. when they tore away a bigger chunk of brick than expected. The brick struck the scaffolding, ripping down planks of woods on which they stood.

The men, who were wearing construction helmets, fell with the bricks and scaffolding to the walkway. Three workers on the left side of the scaffolding were not injured.

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The Wolverine supervisor said he was inside the building when a worker ran inside, asking him to call 911. By the time the supervisor got outside, an ambulance was treating the men.

Paramedics took two men to the hospital on backboards, Grand Rapids Fire Department Battalion Chief Kevin Sehlmeier said. The third worker limped into a waiting ambulance. The injuries did not appear life-threatening, Sehlmeier said.


The fire department notified inspectors from Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which will investigate the accident and determine whether the company violated safety regulations, Sehlmeier said.

A Bouwkamp company official said he could not comment until he learned more about the accident. The company is a subcontractor on the project for Wolverine.

The Peninsular Club's athletic club is being renovated by MVP Sportsplex, the DeVos family-owned company that bought the popular, long-time downtown health club in January for \$1 million. The club is spending up to \$1.5 million on the renovation, much of that with funds raised by members.

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