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City Officials Cite Defects in Hoisting System of Crane That Collapsed, Killing a Worker

By [AL BAKER](#) APRIL 5, 2012

The crane [that collapsed this week](#) at a project on the Far West Side of Manhattan, killing a worker, had a number of defects in its hoisting system, city officials said Thursday.

Just before the collapse, a steel-wire cable of the crane snapped, according to a city official, sending its boom crashing down and killing the worker, Michael Simermeyer.

An official cause of the crash on Tuesday, at a project to extend the No. 7 subway line, has not been fully determined.

On Thursday, in his first public comments on the accident, Robert D. LiMandri, the commissioner of the city's [Buildings Department](#), said, "Our engineers have found defects in the hoisting system of the crane that failed, and as a result, the maintenance and operation of the crane in the days and weeks prior to this tragic accident has become the focus of our investigation."

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He added, "Any contractor who operates cranes on a job site must perform daily and monthly checks to ensure their equipment is safe to use."

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When the boom fell, it swung down onto Mr. Simermeyer, 30.

"One of the reasons could be poor maintenance over a period of time," said the city official, who was briefed on the investigation but spoke only on the condition of anonymity because the investigation was continuing.

"What is being looked at, at the site, is something that would have occurred within weeks," he added.

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A central issue in the investigation will be determining whether the crane — a 24-year-old, 170-foot Manitowoc model — was in proper working condition and who was responsible for keeping it fit to do the heavy job being demanded of it, bearing loads of up to 90,000 pounds and working

Cranes are supposed to be inspected, at a minimum, once a year with records kept,” said Ronald L. Brodek, the owner of Brodek Crane Inspections, in Phoenix. “Then, depending on the hours it works and what it is being used for, you do maintenance and other inspections during the year. If you’re doing a lot of lifts, you might inspect it twice a month or three times a month because the wire rope is what is going to wear out on a crane first.”

Many contractors demand that every on-site crane undergo an inspection by an independent third party before being put to work.

There are national standards for the maintenance and operation of mobile cranes, said S. Scott Orr, the owner of Paradise Crane Consultants, in Edgewood, N.M. Also, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration published a new crane standard in late 2010, he said.

“I investigate a lot of crane accidents,” Mr. Orr said. “And these kinds of things shouldn’t happen, but they happen a lot. And they usually happen not for one single reason, but for a series of reasons.”

No load was being dropped off or retrieved by the crane when part of it snapped at the site, on 34th Street, between 10th and 11th Avenues. The crane, owned by Yonkers Contracting, was registered with the city’s Buildings Department, and therefore subject to annual inspections by the agency.

Adam Lisberg, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which controlled the work site, said Thursday that a contractor, not the agency, was responsible for maintaining the crane.

The crane received a full inspection by the Buildings Department in July and passed. Another inspection by the city agency was initiated in January, but was interrupted because the crane was in use. Only part of the examination occurred; the rest had been rescheduled for Thursday — two days after the accident.

Christine Haughney contributed reporting.

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