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Neighbors cry foul

Four months after the Vet's implosion, some neighbors who suffered property damage claim they are getting the runaround.

By [David Gambacorta](#)
July 22, 2004

By most accounts, the March 21 implosion of Veterans Stadium was a sound success.



The explosions went off as planned, the arena collapsed in a heap and homes in the neighborhood remained standing.

But some problems emerged -- quite literally -- beneath the surface, according to stadium-area neighbors.

About two dozen property owners have submitted claims for minor damages such as cracks in steps and homes. The complaints have mostly come from the south side of Geary Street, which stood just 150 feet away from the former stadium.

The area received plenty of attention before the implosion. The Phillies held monthly community meetings to reassure nervous neighbors that demolition company Brandenburg Industrial Service Co. and implosion contractor Demolition Dynamics were taking the necessary precautions.

Representatives from Brandenburg even canvassed the neighborhoods of the [Stadium Complex Special Services District](#) prior to the implosion, videotaping the interiors and exteriors of homes near ground zero.

The companies had a \$61-million insurance coverage package in the event that homes were damaged when the Vet came down, according to a letter from Brandenburg spokesperson John Webb.

Brandenburg and Demolition Dynamics also set up a hotline for residents to call to report damages.

But four months after the implosion, residents are complaining that the companies aren't coming through with the insurance money.

"They're making up every excuse they can," said Judy Cerrone, director of district one of the stadium district. "People have been calling them for three months. All of a sudden, they forgot about the insurance money."

Cerrone said one neighbor produced before-and-after pictures of mild structural damage, such as cracked steps and reopened settlement cracks, during a recent visit with Brandenburg representatives. The neighbor was told that "soft soil" was to blame, according to Cerrone.

"We have a copy of the video they shot before the implosion, and you can see the difference," she said. "I feel bad for all of the people who thought they were going to be covered."

A couple of residents on the 1300 block of Geary Street had a mixed take on the extent of the damages earlier this week.

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"Anything that was bad before got worse [after the implosion]," said one woman, who declined to give her name. Formerly sealed settlement cracks on her walls and on the ground reopened, and the street in front of her house sunk in, she said.

"I wouldn't say it's anything that bad," said another woman. "Some people around here just like to complain for the sake of complaining."

Stiles said the Phillies have been in touch with Brandenburg and Demolition Dynamics officials, who returned to the neighborhood Friday to look into claims. The companies are deferring comment about residents' complaints to the Phillies.

"We only recently got the impression that the people weren't getting responses to the calls they placed," Stiles said. "We talked to the companies and made sure they got out to the sites to identify the damages. We're confident it's being handled now."

Stiles said the contractors will inform homeowners whether the damages they reported were caused by either the demolition or implosion.

Shawn Jalosinski, executive director of the Stadium Complex Special Services District, also has been keeping a close eye on the tense process.

"I have to say that the neighbors aren't at a comfort level right now. We have to do what we can to get them there," he said.

If neighbors disagree with the contractors' findings, Jalosinski said the district would bring in its own experts to evaluate the damages.

"The reality of the situation is that the implosion went well," Jalosinski said. "We made sure the appropriate insurance was in place, and Brandenburg did respond to our concerns about minimizing the impact and controlling the dust during the cleanup process."

But the ongoing cleanup at the Vet site is causing new concerns. As workers prepare to convert the area into a parking lot, neighbors say they can feel their homes shake.

Jalosinski said a seismograph already is in place to monitor the vibrations, which could cause further damages.

"It's a little ridiculous," said one of the Geary Street neighbors. "I mean, they're out there working six days a week, and our homes are constantly shaking."

In the meantime, Cerrone is anxious to see her neighbors have their homes restored. She said the implosion caused broken windows, cement cracks and one instance of a dented granite floor.

"No one over here is trying to make money by putting in false claims," Cerrone said.

Stiles agreed that none of the claims are for anything "catastrophic," but added "this is a question of cause and effect, and inevitably there's some tension over who's responsible for those cracks."

Cerrone expressed lingering regret over the Phillies picking Brandenburg and Demolition Dynamics in the first place. She had been pushing for the company that ran the demolition of the Naval Hospital in 2001.

"We opposed them both, but the Phillies didn't listen to the community. They went with the cheapest bid," she said.

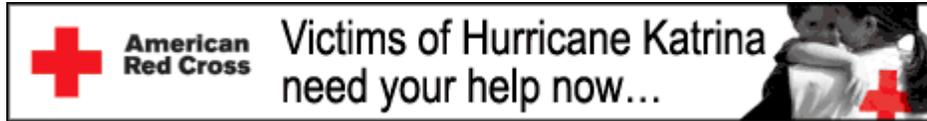
Stiles said the team is comfortable with its choices.

"We have an ongoing, important relationship with the neighbors, and I understand there's some arguments against those companies," he said. "On the whole, though, we feel we hired two companies who have been very

successful."

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