

# Memorial Stadium redesign underway after May collapse



By Lisa Vernon  
Staff Reporter

Following the collapse of a portion of Memorial Stadium last month, structural engineers have decided to give the stadium's section 14 a new look.

Engineers are currently in the process of designing a new section to replace not only the part that collapsed on May 17, but to replace the entire section, said Rich McDermott, University of Nebraska-Lincoln director of facilities management.

He said the mirror image of the collapsed section, section 18, will not be rebuilt, but reinforced with support beams to prevent it from a possible collapse.

UNL Chancellor Graham Spanier said the new design for the section would meet three goals.

First, he said, it will be 100 percent safe within the limits allowed by modern construction techniques.

Second, the section will include more seats to help meet the continuing high demand for tickets.

Finally, the new section will include additional space to help meet the growing need for space for disabled football fans.

"We will strive to have the stadium reconstruction completed before the first football game this fall, but we can't promise this," Spanier said. "Safety will be our first priority."

UNL officials hired two outside firms, Batheja & Associates and Wiss, Janney, Estner Associates Inc. following the incident to find the cause of the collapse, and then to do a

structural analysis of the complete stadium.

Batheja presented its report on the cause of the collapse at a press conference last month. According to Kelton Bush, structural engineer for the firm, the collapse occurred because of a small, localized concrete failure. This failure consequently resulted in a slow developing crack.

"The cause of the crack itself is a result of inadequate shear reinforcing in the concrete. Cracks occur in concrete all the time, that is its nature, but without shear reinforcing the crack had a result," Bush said. "No one is to blame for the fall though, because when this structure was built in 1964, this reinforcement was not needed; there were different building codes back then."

According to UNL officials, repairing and rebuilding the stadium will be costly. The funds to cover this cost may come from the Athletic Department Capital Facilities Repair and Renovation Fund, but will depend on a variety of factors relating to determination of liability and insurance coverage.

No state tax funds will be used, Spanier said.

"The university takes great concern for the collapse of section 14 in Memorial Stadium," Spanier said. "The football program is a great asset to Nebraska and is very important to this university."

"When the complete process of evaluation is completed, Memorial Stadium will be the most studied stadium in the country."

The aftermath of the collapse of section 14 at Memorial Stadium last month. Engineers are currently in the process of getting the stadium ready in time for Nebraska's home season opener on Sept. 4.

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