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Insurance Claims Likely to Follow Dome Roof Collapse

For those thinking of suing the designers of the collapsed Metrodome roof in Minneapolis, they are a little late. It has been done . . . without much success. Chuck Spevacek, an attorney with Meagher Geer in Minneapolis, defended the New York-based design firm, then known as Geiger Berger, in the early 1980s. The Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission (MSFC) had sued after several deflations, claiming the roof was improperly designed and could not withstand wind and snow.

A six-week trial produced an award that was far less than the MSFC had wanted, Spevacek said.

Spevacek, however, does see a strong possibility of other types of lawsuits resulting from the Dec. 12 roof collapse. He points out that virtually any party with a connection to the venue likely would have claims. That list could be long, including the Minnesota Vikings who had to move two games; the Minnesota Twins who had to move their popular TwinsFest; and sponsors of a large Asian community celebration who had to cancel the event. Others who likely could file claims include those paying the cost of preparing alternative sites for Vikings games; vendors; parking lot operators; and those hit with additional travel expenses.

Spevacek said that putting specific dollar amounts on any losses would be challenging. The MSFC has insurance through FM Global, but it comes with a sizable deductible.

Spevacek, a long-time sports fan, noted that what has been missing in the aftermath of the collapse is a statement from the Minnesota Vikings about their intention to continue playing in the Metrodome. Such silence might indicate the organization has concerns about the ongoing safety provided people attending games in the 29-year-

old structure. Spevacek, who does not represent any party with an interest in the dome collapse, said the roof was designed to hang safely above the seating

and standing areas if it deflated. But, he added, falling roof panels are another issue. The football team has been seeking a new facility. ■



Chuck Spevacek