



Engineers from a Bay Area engineering firm visited the hotel Monday to determine how stable the structure is and whether it can be shored up.

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Stabilizing or demolishing the Hotel Marysville will be costly. The City is preparing to do it if the owner doesn't.

While the city presses owners of the Hotel Marysville to abate the threat to public safety left in the wake of the June 15 fire, an engineering firm was onsite Monday for a closer examination to determine whether the building can be stabilized to speed re-opening of Highway 70 through downtown.

On the same day, city officials met online with more than two dozen representatives from the California Office of Emergency Services, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and Yuba County Office of Emergency Services, in search of answers to questions regarding available state financial or technical aid, required procedures for

abating cancer-causing friable asbestos, and whether the hotel's status as a California historic resource complicates demolition.

"Our number one priority is resolving the public safety issue so the highway can be re-opened and downtown traffic flow can be restored to normalcy," said City Manager Jim Schaad. "While it is the responsibility of the property owner to abate the problem, we're preparing to do it ourselves if necessary."

"Before we can determine if the highway can be re-opened, we have to know if the building can stand as is, can be made safe through stabilization, or whether demolition is the only path at this time," Schaad said. "We need to know what is required by local, state, or federal air quality regulators when it comes to dealing with the asbestos. And we need to know if there are any limitations or requirements when it comes to stabilizing or demolishing a building on the California Register of Historical Resources."

The city is collecting estimates to tear down the building with varying method for containing the asbestos. The city was meeting Wednesday with a representative of the United States Environmental Protection Agency to determine what is required.

"All this information is being shared with the property owner," said Marysville Mayor Chris Branscum. "But this is also information the city will need to act in the unfortunate circumstance that the owners do not come forward to take responsibility."

The mayor praised city staff's response to date and noted that stabilizing or demolishing the asbestos-laden five-story structure will be costly and not completed overnight.

"Every department in the city has been stretched and city senior management has been highly engaged in dealing with a very, very complex problem, and a problem whose ultimate resolution, by all indications that we've received so far, will require an enormous amount of capital to resolve."

"We are demanding the property owner take full responsibility, but we're not sitting on our hands waiting for them to step up to the plate," said Council member Dominique Belza. "They either act soon--and so far there has been no indication they will—or we will be forced to."

Council member Brad Hudson praised the assistance of surrounding local government agencies, including Yuba and Sutter counties, and the cities of Yuba City and Oroville, for providing assistance with personnel, portable digital signs to help direct traffic, and letters of support for Marysville's declaration of a local emergency and its request for assistance from the state. "We thank them with sincerity and want them to know we will get the highway open as fast as possible," he said.

Council member Stuart Gilchrist noted that despite the closure of the state highway, downtown Marysville businesses remain open and accessible. "Traffic patterns have changed a bit, but Marysville is still laid out on a grid and easy to navigate," he said. "The disruption is impacting different businesses differently, of course. There is no reason to avoid going downtown to eat or shop."

A remedy could be shoring up the building instead of demolishing it, at least initially. That's the purpose of Monday's inspection by the Emeryville engineering firm of Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates Inc. They are assessing the structural elements of the building, such as the concrete columns and floor structures, and the exterior brick and concrete walls. The company has extensive experience with large fire-damaged structures, having investigated multiple apartment, townhome, and condominium fires in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Sacramento.

The company will develop conceptual recommendations for near-term stabilization or mitigation of risks posed by the damaged building structure.

The Hotel Marysville was added to the California Register of Historical Resources in May of 1997. The register includes buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California. Buildings on the registry are eligible for tax credits for preservation projects. The city will be consulting with the California State Parks which maintains the registry.

The City of Marysville has declared a state of local emergency and is seeking state and federal assistance in dealing with the emergency. It is also seeking any assistance available to business owners who are suffering from the various detours which have disrupted normal business traffic.
