

# RIVERWALK COLLAPSE INJURES 10-YEAR-OLD BOY - THE COUNTY IS SEEKING ANSWERS TO WHY ANOTHER PORTION OF THE HUTCHINSON ISLAND WALKWAY SANK.

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*By Pamela E. Walck Savannah Morning News September 26, 2000 Publication: Savannah Morning News (GA) Page: 1A Word Count: 697*

A peaceful stroll on Hutchinson Island's riverwalk quickly turned into a scare for two tourists Monday when a portion of the walkway collapsed and injured a 10-year-old boy.

The boy and his mother, guests at the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort, were standing on the red-brick walkway when a five-foot section collapsed. Hotel officials wouldn't identify the visitors, but said the boy was treated for minor scrapes and bruises he received after tumbling into a waist-high hole.

"We did have part of the riverwalk fall while he was standing on it," said Kristin Fulford, director of hotel public relations.

The riverwalk runs alongside the Savannah River, from the far side of the Savannah

International Trade & Convention Center to the east side of the Westin. It is owned by Chatham County, and county officials closed the entire portion of the walkway by the hotel.

Part of the problem could be that during construction of the riverwalk, additional dirt was used to build up that portion of Slip 1.

"It appears that the earth beneath those pavers began settling and that caused the collapse," said Patrick Monahan, the assistant county manager.

However, this isn't the first time the county has had problems with the walkway collapsing.

In April, a 30-foot section of the riverwalk was closed along Slip 2 after underground support beams snapped and caused the red-bricks to tumble away.

Since then, the county's builder -- Maritime Trade Center Builders -- has conducted studies to determine what caused the first portion of the walkway to crumble.

"Even though, to the casual observer, it appears that nothing has happened, some work has progressed," said Monahan. "MTCB appears to be over-cautious, but wants to find a fix for the problem."

This latest portion of the walkway will be included in the repairs, which are slated to begin within 30 days.

"The concern, to me, is we need to get it fixed," said Commission Chairman Billy Hair. "It is our contractor's responsibility to fix it -- fix it quickly and fix it right. And we will do everything we can to make sure they do that."

Until then, it will be a minor inconvenience for hotel guests, who will be restricted from the far side of the hotel.

Fulford said the eastern portion of the riverwalk doesn't usually get too much foot traffic -- but it isn't unusual to see people occasionally catching views of the Savannah River from the east side of the hotel. The portion of the riverwalk closest to the hotel's floating docks will remain open, but Fulford said the county is closely monitoring that portion of walkway.

"The problem now is the long-term solution so guests and visitors can feel safe when they walk

along the river," Monahan said.

It cost the county \$6 million to build the river walk. Repair costs, which are expected to fall under the construction insurance policy, are undetermined.

"I've been very concerned about the riverwalk when a part of it collapsed and even more concerned that someone has been injured," said Commissioner Martin Jackel. "I'm just shocked that the builder didn't take more precautions to make sure there were no injuries."

Chatham County government/political issues reporter Pamela E. Walck can be reached at 652-0363 or [pwalck@savannahnow.com](mailto:pwalck@savannahnow.com).

(1) Carl Elmore/Savannah Morning News A riverwalk extension east of the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort collapsed Monday morning, injuring a 10-year-old hotel guest. (2) File photo by John Carrington/Morning News PAST COLLAPSE In April, another portion of the riverwalk began to crumble along Slip 2, which is between the Savannah International Trade & Convention Center and the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort. A 30-foot portion of the walkway collapsed after underground support cables snapped. The cables have since been reattached, but the dislocated bricks and damaged cement haven't been repaired. GRAPHIC: Vita Salvemini, photo by John Carrington/Savannah Morning News RIVERWALK EXTENSION PROBLEM AREAS Soil bordering the riverwalk extension east of the Weston Savannah Harbor Resort may be settling, causing portions of the brick walkway to cave. Officials hope to begin repairs on the entire walkway within 30 days. APRIL COLLAPSE During construction, silted material was replaced with good soil. NEW PROBLEM AREA During construction, fill soil was used to build up the area. SOURCE: Chatham County

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**Savannah Morning News (GA)**

**Date:** September 26, 2000

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