

For Immediate Release
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Key component is declared too dangerous in 4 major Twin Cities residential projects now under construction

Wood framing flunks independent fire-safety analysis

Minneapolis, Minnesota (July 13, 2016) – A leading voice on behalf of construction workers today demanded immediate action by municipal inspectors in cities where four major residential projects are swiftly rising in the Twin Cities with material that violates legal requirements and presents potentially deadly consequences in the event of fire.

The Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council has independent verification that contractor Big-D Construction Corp., of Salt Lake City, is using wood framing that does not comply with the state building code and is not sufficiently fire-retardant in three of the projects collectively valued in the tens of millions of dollars. The fourth project, led by DLC Construction, of Miami, equally falls short.

“It’s a textbook case of operators of large out of state contractors coming in and cutting corners to ultimately put more money in their wallet,” said Dan McConnell, the Trades Council’s business manager, who also notes that Big-D and DLC are relying on a workforce that is paid substandard wages and benefits at each site to further shave expenses.

“If that means halting construction, tearing down and starting over, then I believe the safety and well being of the future residents of these buildings and our firefighter’s demands that action be taken,” said McConnell, who has turned over the independent findings to each of the city’s building inspection divisions. He called on them to “reject the use of substandard fire-retardant treated wood on these projects under your jurisdiction.”

Collectively, the projects offer many hundreds of residential units, and retail and office space:

Residences at 1700, 1730 Plymouth Ave., Minnetonka (Big-D)
Lake Calhoun apartments, 3118 W. Lake St., Minneapolis (Big-D)
Hello Apartments, 9130-9220 Olson Hwy., Golden Valley (Big-D)
Central Park West, 1511 Utica Ave. S., St. Louis Park/Golden Valley (DLC)

The framing for these projects, which are rapidly nearing completion, is being made with lower-cost lumber that is not properly treated to retard flames. This profit-padding tactic creates a risk that threatens the projects and anyone who inhabits them or is in the vicinity.

Given the distressing independent testing results, the Trades Council has asked building officials in Minneapolis, Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, and Minnetonka, where this substandard lumber is being used, to bar the contractors from proceeding with the projects while this potentially deadly material is in place on the sites.

“We need every city involved to act as swiftly as possible before tragedy strikes its citizens and visitors to their communities,” McConnell said. “Let’s hope these corporations realize there is no amount of money that is worth proceeding under risky conditions.”

Before independent testing on material from the Golden Valley project declared the lumber unfit, independent analysis was conducted on lumber for all four sites by Johnson & Associates Consulting Services to determine whether it complies with the state building code.

Based on the labeling of the lumber produced by the Chicago FlameProof Co. and used in these projects, Johnson & Associates concluded that the framing fails to meet the certification standards of Minnesota’s state building code for fire safety.

Failure to abide by the code “risks the possibility of premature structural collapse and substandard building performance in a fire condition,” Greg Johnson, principal consultant for Johnson & Associates, explained in a letter to the Trades Council. “This could easily and unnecessarily threaten the lives of firefighters responding to a structural fire.”

Armed with this independent scrutiny, McConnell said the Trades Council “urges these cities to use any and all means necessary to ensure that their codes are enforced and the public be kept safe from the peril this kind of cost-cutting presents.”

About Us:

The Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council advocates for unionized construction workers throughout Minneapolis and surrounding areas. Roughly 15,000 members strong, the Minneapolis Trades Council has provided leadership and advocacy for unionized construction workers for decades. For more information, visit: <http://mplsbctc.org/>

Reporters and Editors: To schedule an interview with Minneapolis Trades Council Business Manager Dan McConnell, contact Robb Leer at 612.701.0608 or robbl@leercommunication.com.

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