

CROSS-SA

Confidential Reporting on Structural Safety Southern Africa

INTRODUCTION

The public assume that buildings and bridges are safe, and they have confidence in the people who design, build and maintain them. The public are also confident that high standards are set and guarded by vigilant authorities. When there is a collapse the consequences are catastrophic for all concerned, and it is of immense value to identify why failures have occurred and to work towards preventing future failures.

That is the reason why Confidential Reporting on Structural Safety (CROSS) was established in 2005 in the United Kingdom. In South Africa the CROSS-SA website was created and launched recently. For structural engineering practitioners this is of extreme importance.

ABOUT CROSS-SA

Reports sent to CROSS are completely confidential – neither personal details nor information that could be used to identify a project or product are used.

CROSS-SA seeks to capitalise on the CROSS scheme, but will be administered within southern Africa. Reports are to be shared on the INTERNATIONAL CROSS website, and we shall eventually be joined by other international sites. CROSS-SA intends working with the professions,

industry and government on safety matters concerning the design, construction and use of building and civil engineering structures. To achieve this it will:

- collect confidential data on the concerns of structural and civil engineering practitioners and others
- provide comments in relation to these concerns
- maintain a database of reports and publications
- collect data from public sources on failures, collapses and relevant incidents
- consider whether unacceptable risk exists, or might arise in the future
- promote a positive attitude to learning from experience, and
- help to influence changes to improve structural safety.

WHY DO WE NEED CROSS-SA?

- The only guidance regarding the level of problems within the structural industry is given by reports to ECSA (Engineering Council of South Africa).
- From April 2007 to date, 348 cases have been reported to ECSA.
- This is, however, considered to be the tip of an undefined iceberg.
- This system does not contribute to the understanding of the number

of “near misses”, or probably better phrased as “near failures”.

- Anecdotally there is a drop in engineering standards in many areas.
- Only by having a means of collating incidents can we truly identify trends.

BENEFITS OF LEARNING

- Protection of lives and assets.
- Improvements to codes, regulations and best practice.
- Avoiding the trauma of being involved with collapse.
- Reduction in cost to all involved in a failure.
- Ethical considerations.
- Improvements to corporate memory.
- Enhanced reputation of sponsors.
- Cost benefit to society.

JSD AND STRUCTURAL SAFETY

CROSS-SA is one of a series of initiatives by the JSD to raise the standard of structural engineering (see article on page 30).

We NEED YOU to help us begin to understand the problems within our industry, and to enable others to learn from the problems that have occurred. Please confidentially report structural problems via the CROSS-SA website at the following address: <http://www.structural-safety.co.za> □

