

## "Lawyers to See Remains of Porch"

### Accident Debris Stored at O'Hare

David Heinzmann

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As lawyers for victims of last week's porch collapse plan to get their first look Tuesday at the debris from the tragedy, city officials said homeowners worried about the safety of their own porches should hire structural engineers to perform inspections.

Lawyers for the mother of Kelly McKinnell, one of 13 people who died in the June 29 collapse, and David Dermejian, who was injured, planned to inspect the debris with their engineer at an O'Hare International Airport hangar where the remains of the structure are being kept.

The lawyers also asked for the debris to be moved a third time, away from the high-security area at O'Hare that would be off limits if the nation's terror threat were increased. The decking from the porch is laid out on the floor at the hangar and the other pieces of wood are in dump trucks and bins, lawyer Thomas Demetrio said after he met with city lawyers.

The plaintiffs' lawyers, Demetrio and Robert Clifford, continued to criticize city officials for tearing down the porch hours after it collapsed during a party at 713 W. Wrightwood Ave.

The lawyers have requested inspection reports from the building going back to 1998. Clifford said he hopes to find some evidence in the reports to shed light on how city inspectors visited the building annually in the last five years but never found fault with the illegally built porch.

Dermejian sued the city, as well as the apartment building's owner, Philip J. Pappas, and the contractor who built the porch in 1998 without city permits.

### Attorneys

- Thomas A. Demetrio
- Francis Patrick Murphy

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McKinnell's mother, Jean Ware, has not named the city in her lawsuit but could amend her complaint later, Demetrio said.

A judge Monday granted the city's request to keep the building's residential units vacant for a week, pending the rebuilding of the porch, said Jennifer Hoyle, a spokeswoman for the city Law Department..

The collapse of the 5-year-old porch has raised concerns in the minds of many Chicagoans who live in buildings with similar structures. Buildings Department spokeswoman Breelyn Pete said Monday that building owners who are concerned about the safety of their porches should hire a structural engineer to inspect them.

Structural engineer William Lavicka said there are about 500 licensed structural engineers in the Chicago area. Many of them would be available to conduct such inspections, he said. He estimated the cost for an inspection would run between \$500 and \$1,000. Other experts said the cost could be as high as \$3,000, depending on the thoroughness of the inspection and some engineers might be reluctant to do the work for fear of being sued.