

Murray & Roberts could face civil suit - report

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Cape Town - Murray & Roberts and other building suppliers linked to the deadly collapse of the formwork set up ahead of the construction of a pedestrian bridge over the M1 highway near Sandton could face a civil lawsuit.

But the burden of proof of negligence would be on the victims, lawyers told Fin24's sister publication City Press.

Leon Malan of Malan & Mohale Attorneys in Pretoria said if the 23 injured victims and the relatives of the two people who died decided to sue, they would have to ensure they had proof of what caused the collapse, City Press reported on Sunday.

Murray & Roberts Group Chief Executive Henry Laas said on Thursday there are a number of investigations underway to determine the cause or causes of the collapse of the bridge support structure.

He however could not say when the investigations would be concluded.

The Department of Labour and the City of Johannesburg have also started their own investigations into the tragedy.

Mokgadi Pela, spokesperson for the department of labour, told City Press it would issue a report on its preliminary investigation next week.

Laas meanwhile resorted to full page advertisements in the Sunday press to reiterate the construction group's commitment to support the victims and their families and to urgently, but accurately determine the cause(s) of the structure's collapse.

The R4.5bn construction company said last week it would compensate the victims and relatives by "covering their costs".

Asked who may be held liable for the tragic collapse, Malan told City Press: "It depends - one would first have to see what caused the bridge to collapse and there would be a proper investigation.

"It could be established that there was another contractor hired to erect the bridge and all of those companies could be named in a lawsuit. But you'll most likely find all parties might become defendants in a lawsuit."

Malan said he would assume the companies have the necessary insurance in place to cover themselves in the event of such civil claims.

Murray & Roberts' share price has lost 12.5% of its value since last Wednesday when the tragedy happened. The share price closed down 3.69% at R10.69 on Friday from an opening of R12.03 last Wednesday.

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