

# Sheraton Hyatt Regency Disaster

The Midwest Symposium has been held continuously at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center Hotel in Kansas City (now the Sheraton Crown Center Hotel) since February of 1985. During that time about 18,000 Midwest Symposium attendees have stayed in the hotel and would have traveled the second-floor elevated mezzanine bridge from the guest rooms to meeting rooms, ballrooms, and restaurants.

Most of our attendees probably do not know that when the hotel opened there were two additional bridges in the lobby. One crossed the lobby at the third floor directly to the ballrooms but was offset several yards. Another, the fourth-floor bridge, was suspended directly above the second-floor walkway.



floor walkway dropped several inches, paused, then fell completely onto the second-floor walkway (the one most of us have used). Then, both walkways fell to the lobby floor, killing 114 and injuring 216. Survivors were buried

beneath steel, concrete, and glass. Water flooded the lobby from the hotel's ruptured sprinkler system and put trapped survivors at risk of drowning. The rescue operation lasted 14 hours.



Design flaws were found to be the cause of the collapse. The third-floor bridge did not collapse but was later removed. Only the current, second floor bridge was rebuilt.

The Hyatt Regency collapse remains the deadliest unintentional structural failure in American history but could be topped by the June 2021 condominium building collapse in Surfside Florida. The Hyatt collapse was the



On the evening of July 17, 1981, approximately 1,600 people gathered in the atrium for an event, and many people were on all three of the bridges. Guests heard popping noises moments before the fourth-

deadliest structural collapse of any kind in the U.S. until the intentional terrorist collapse of the World Trade Center towers 20 years later. A memorial was dedicated to the Hyatt collapse on November 12, 2015 in Hospital Hill Park across the street from the hotel to the east. It included a \$25,000 donation from Hallmark Cards.

The Midwest Symposium held its first conference in the Hyatt in February, 1985, about three and a half years following the disaster, and after the hotel lobby had been rebuilt.

A more complete description along with additional photos are available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyatt\\_Regency\\_walkway\\_collapse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyatt_Regency_walkway_collapse) and in a National Public Radio story marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hyatt Collapse <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/17/1016603199/one-of-the-deadliest-u-s-accidental-structural-collapses-happened-40-years-ago-t>.

On a lighter note, a raised walkway has been in place which allows walking from the Sheraton Crown Center to the Crown Center shops and food court, as well as the Kansas City Union Train Station which in addition to being an active Amtrack railroad station and museum houses several restaurants, a science museum and the Kansas City Children's museum.

The walkway is especially useful in February which gives lots of alternatives to MSLBD attendees without their having to get out in the weather!

