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Restaurant wreck: I'm not insured

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The uninsured owner of the damaged Indian restaurant to be demolished in Surry Hills today said his livelihood was now destroyed.

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Fasir Uddin, 54, said he was very upset after cracks were found in the Indian Chilli restaurant's wall early this morning.

"This has ruined my life, my everything is there," said the restaurant's 54-year-old owner, Fasir Uddin.

Mr Uddin said he had spent three years building up the business and he was not insured.

"[It is] very hard, whole year was very quiet, waiting for Christmas time."

Mr Uddin said that two employees had called him last night when they heard cracking sounds.

"My people call me, I came here ... [there was] cracking sound, the building moved," he said.

Asked if he was scared, he replied: "Of course, anything can happen."

"We can't close the door, heard cracking noise from the roof, then we saw the building was moving.

"Very frightening, whole building was cracking."

He said the two employees who were aged in their mid-20s were now sleeping.

Mr Uddin said his wife was very upset.

"Everything is sad, my livelihood had been here."

Mr Uddin said that he had a 22-year-old daughter and a 12-year-old son.

He has already spoken to WorkCover investigators, and does not know what he'll do now.

Cracking restaurant to be demolished

An excavator is on its way to a building site at Surry Hills, as a crew awaits orders to demolish the damaged Indian restaurant.

Officials are working to turn off gas and power to the restaurant, Indian Chilli, and surrounding properties.

The state manager of the construction company, ProBuild, Mark Nathan said it did not appear that the building work had been responsible for the damage to the restaurant.

Structural engineers have been at the site since early this morning.

WorkCover NSW and the City of Sydney were both investigating, Michael Leyland, director of city projects for the

council, said.

He said there would be a "slow demolition" of the restaurant, and was unable to say when the other shops in the block would be able to reopen.

Crown Street closed

Crown Street has been closed in both directions between Foveaux and Arthur streets, the RTA has said.

Southbound traffic was being diverted at Foveaux Street and northbound traffic was being diverted at Arthur Street.

Motorists were told to expect delays and to avoid the area.

However, this morning there had only been a "slight impact" on traffic, an RTA spokeswoman said,

The road closures and diversions are expected to remain in place until at least December 4, the RTA said.

A police spokeswoman said the road would be "closed indefinitely", and the reopening would depend on the outcome of the restaurant's demolition, expected to occur today.

A spokeswoman for the State Transit Authority said she was not aware of any delays affecting bus services that used the closed section of Crown Street.

The services - including the 301, 302, 303, x03 and 352 routes - had been diverted via Devonshire, Bourke, and Foveaux streets, she said.

Cracking noticed about 1am

Police said the cracking was noticed by the operators of the restaurant about 1am.

"About 1am the occupants in the Indian Chilli premises heard some cracking and felt some movement," Inspector George Bradbury, from Surry Hills local area command, said.

The occupants then alerted authorities and police evacuated the area about 3am.

"At this stage we've got emergency crews making an assessment of what can be done," he said.

Police did not know how long that section of Crown Street would be closed, he said.

Two residential properties at the back of the restaurant had also been evacuated.

The restaurant was expected to be destroyed today, said Andrew Ferguson, state secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining, and Energy Union.

"Without any doubt the age of the building is a factor here," he said.

He estimated the building housing the restaurant to be as much as 100 years old.

"We'll see the demolition of buildings in the next few hours," he said.

He said that there had been the danger of multiple fatalities early this morning, and said that 20 members of his union would not recommence work until the situation was resolved.

Resident heard loud banging

Greg O'Brien, 50, was sleeping at his home at the back of the restaurant when police knocked on the door about 1.30am.

"We got a loud banging on the door and we heard that the restaurant next door had been damaged," he said.

"After we left our house we could regularly here a snap, snap, snap from the restaurant."

He said that an engineer from ProBuild arrived quite quickly after being called by the site manager.

"The engineer came up our stairs and he looked out at the restaurant and said 'Oh! That's serious. You guys have to move out now,' " he said.

Mr O'Brien said he spoke to the men who worked in the restaurant who told him what had happened.

They said that they had heard noises during the evening but had ignored them, he said.

However, when they went to leave the building they found the front door did not work properly, he said.

They then inspected the property and noticed major cracks on the walls, he said.

Mr O'Brien, who bought his house in May last year and lived there with his wife, said his home appeared unaffected.

"At this stage, I can't see any problems. We'll see what happens when the other structure falls down."

He said that the wall of an annex between the restaurant and his home had already collapsed.

He said the men who ran the Indian restaurant were very upset.

They told him they had been there for three years and had spent about \$3000 on their sign alone.

"They were pretty concerned that their income was about to stop," he said.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2007/11/28/1196036938433.html>