

## 2 construction experts on what to do if you're worried your condo, house, or building is at risk of collapsing

Jenny Powers Jul 1, 2021, 11:40 AM



Search and rescue personnel work in the rubble of the 12-story condo tower that crumbled to the ground during a partially collapse of the building on June 24, 2021 in Surfside, Florida. Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Ever since the tragic Surfside condo collapse in the early-morning hours of June 24, Adam Mopsick's phone has been ringing more than usual with calls from both new and existing clients concerned about the state of their own buildings.

As CEO of Miami's Amicon Management, an owner's representative and construction firm with an expertise in managing condo associations on remediations, Mopsick and his team help assess [existing issues](#) and work to expedite them, along with putting preventive measures in place to mitigate future damage.

Mopsick spoke to Insider about how condo boards and building management can take immediate action to ensure public safety — as well as some common red flags to look out for if you're worried your building is at risk of collapsing.



Adam Mopsick. Brett Hufziger

### Get a condition assessment of your property from a qualified engineer

Hire a local engineer specializing in forensic analysis to determine the health of your building.

Similar to getting a physical at a doctor's office, an engineer will tell you how healthy or sick your building is and prescribe what needs to be done. Like humans, buildings can even be X-rayed to explore potential structural challenges.

A comprehensive report accompanied by a professional recommendation will allow you to understand the implications of your building's condition.

### Don't defer assessments

According to Mopsick, once an assessment is made, it's not uncommon for boards and owners to push back systemic infrastructural issues due to a lack of reserve funds.

Not addressing neglect and putting off repairs could lead to increased risk and expenses, reduce property values, and become more intrusive to residents down the line when additional work may be required.

### Create a strategic and proactive property-maintenance plan

A positive action that could come out of such a tragedy would be for communities to take a more proactive approach in preventive maintenance.

Mopsick recommended that buildings be inspected at least every five years.

### Check for signs of puddling or inadequate draining in garages, pool decks, or any horizontal surfaces

These red flags often hint at larger structural issues and should be addressed immediately.

Mopsick suggested if there are any planters situated on high floors to be sure to check beneath them to ensure the waterproofing membrane is holding up, as the areas beneath are often in some of the worst conditions on the property.

Standing water of any kind can pose a serious risk. According to residents, a pool contractor, and a former maintenance worker, standing water was an ongoing issue at the Surfside condo. The basement garage had a large volume of water build-up and the pool equipment room regularly flooded, which may have been a contributing factor to the building's collapse.

### Inspect facade for signs of paint fading, cracking, delamination, rusting, and exposed rebar

This kind of wear can't afford to be [ignored](#), as it represents [signs of systemic structural issues](#) with the [building facade](#) and can [reduce the overall strength](#) of the structure.

If you have a swimming pool, check pool surfaces for delamination and follow manufacturer's recommendations for maintenance and replacement.

### Other red flags for single-family homes

Owning a single-family home comes with additional challenges you need to keep an eye out for, Beni Shoshi, owner of East Hampton, New York-based Shoshi Builders, said.

If the soil surrounding your home is caving or seeping into the ground or pose draining issues, it could affect the structural integrity of the foundation of the house.



Beni Shoshi. Beni Shoshi

Visible signs of sinking, dampness, or new cracks are red flags, and while replacing eroded soil with new graded soil is a start, it's important to bring in an expert to inspect the foundation.

In most instances, chimneys are attached to the foundation of a home, so when a chimney looks as if it's pulling away from the house, it could also be the result of aging, soil erosion, too small of a base, or structural deterioration.

Shosi advised taking this as a warning sign and making it a priority to get it inspected by an expert who can not only repair it but also address the root of the problem.

Finally, if ceiling rafters or floor joists (horizontal frames that make up the skeleton of the floor) are visible to the naked eye and appear to be sagging or buckling, Shosi said it could represent structural movement in the foundation, not enough structural support, a roof leak, or signs of aging.