

The dome is down

Minneapolis Star and Tribune
Friday, December 31, 1982

4A



Staff Photo by Neil McLachlan
Pate Huber, who tried to keep the tear from growing.

DOME: 'Air was rushing out' after fabric tore

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The pressure of the storm and a surge of the bucket tore a 3-foot gash in the roof fabric.

"Air began coming out of the stadium, and the fans section flapped in the wind," said Huber, the Metropolitan's assistant superintendent for building and grounds. "Each second, the tear grew larger. Huber ordered workers off the roof."

He grabbed a rope and tried to pull himself up the steep incline toward the widening hole, but the roof was slippery with ice and he could not get a grip.

By 4:30 p.m., the Vekopet tear had become "colossal" and was heavily continuing to grow.

"I climbed in the bucket," Huber said. "I stepped myself up and tried to set the bucket right in the place that was flapping. The bucket was considerably larger than the hole and if the bucket and the flap were, we could have made a repair."

He grabbed the flapping material, but the boom on the crane that was holding the bucket could not move him in close enough.

"Air was rushing out with tremendous velocity," Huber said.

Suddenly the fabric slipped out of his hand and it tumbled at least 10 feet, Huber said in brief talks.

Fearful that the tear might get even larger, stadium officials ordered the fans turned off, hitting the roof in places. Ericson said. Twelve stadium chairs on the second deck were broken, along with large light towers, which had already been lowered, fell off metal braces. A number of lights also were broken.

For the next two hours, Ericson said, officials searched to make sure that none of the 27 workers who had been on the roof were left in the wind-whipped zone of snow. Stadium personnel walked around the roof and checked on the large piles of snow, making if anyone was underneath, Ericson said.

A head count was conducted, and to make sure no one was missed, officials called the homes of the other workers, who had been listed from Double Temporary Help Services at \$2.50 an hour.

At a press conference later in the day, Ericson estimated that the tear was about 150 to 180 feet long, 37 1/2 inches high, he said.

Ericson estimated repair costs at \$300,000 to \$500,000. Four gave no estimate, but he said it would be covered by insurance.

"I've concluded it was literally a freak accident like closed die happens," said Jerry Bull, assistant stadium director. "I see the snow on the roof had almost been cleared when the roof collapsed."

The trouble had begun Monday night, when the Twin Cities area was hit with 14 1/2 inches of snow. Stadium officials turned on the fans that blew hot air through the top layer of the roof. Four said that there was no problem for the first 4 or 8 inches of snow.

But between midnight and 7 a.m., the snow came down heavier than predicted, and 42-mile-per-hour winds created 8-foot drifts on the roof. The snow-melt system couldn't keep up. Pockets of hardened snow settled into roof ledges, creating

by the heavy light towers that hang from the ceiling, causing portions of the roof to sag.

"I've never seen anything on these particular two sections (of the roof) on the size of the tear," said Ericson. "We had just about got it licked. We'd pumped millions of gallons of water" off the roof.

When the roof sagged, Brinler Structures of Buffalo, N.Y., the roof's manufacturer, sent representatives to inspect it. They were on hand yesterday to assess the damage and phase in the dimensions of the tear passed to their headquarters.

The interior of the dome was an eerie light yesterday morning.

The light beams radiated above the broken seats on the upper deck. There were piles of snow on the seats and deck stairways. Broken glass from the smashed lights lay in an aisle.

The roof panels fluttered in the breeze like bookends, and a light snow fell through the hole in the roof to get the melted snow off as fast as possible. Water dripped in through about 20 plugs, creating puddles on the stadium's synthetic turf.

The temperature inside the dome was at least 10 degrees below zero yesterday and Ericson said they were going to keep the snow melting. He said the rest of the season will be about \$400 an hour.

Officials say getting the new panel in place is dependent on weather without heavy snow or high winds. But Ericson, a contractor with the National Weather Service, said that light snow storms are in the long-range forecast with negligible winds.

Ericson said there is no assurance the roof might not rupture in the future under severe conditions.

"I don't know what the deepest snowfall can be. Every structural thing that has ever been built has limitations. So does the roof," he said. "It can take these limitations into that wind. Structures like this are always going to be susceptible to natural disasters."

And he stressed his view that the definition was not a direct result of the storm, but "a series of circumstances related to the storm."

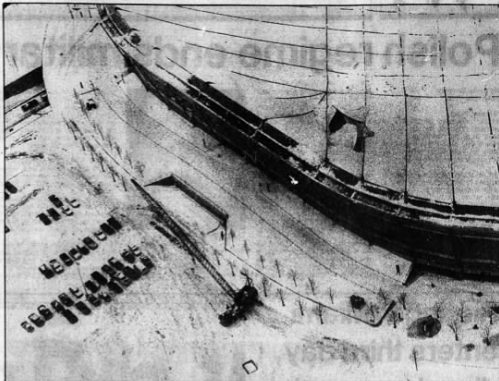
Ericson said if a major storm occurred during a football game, he would evacuate the fans from the stadium.

"It's not as though the roof comes collapsed down on them. The roof defines water down. We could continue playing a football game. We could, probably, but I wouldn't bet on it."

This is the second straight winter that the Metropolitan roof collapsed.

On Nov. 18, 1981, the dome partially deflated after 13 1/2 inches of snow fell on the unheated facility. The deflation was blamed on lack of heat in the system that melts snow on the roof.

The following day the roof came all the way down when a fabric panel on the south side was punctured by a piece of steel support that had been bent after a bolt snapped. The hole was believed to have been weakened the night before during the storm.



Staff Photo by Regina Huchford
The bucket of the crane that caused the tear in the dome is at the bottom center of this photo.



Staff Photo by John Graft
Mike Lynn, Vikings general manager, inspected the damage.

SHERCO 3: Utilities seek waste permits

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and water.

But these permits almost certainly will be forthcoming, largely because there is no longer a strong, organized opposition to Sherco 3. The utilities sensed their differences with an environmental group in June by agreeing to delay construction for two years and to institute programs to conserve energy.

NSP will operate two power plants at Becker, and the third plant there will give the Sherco complex a generating capacity of 2,300 megawatts, enough power to serve 1.3 million homes. The complex will be one of the nation's 25 largest electric-generating stations, and the addition of Sherco 3 could add \$20 to \$30 to the annual electric bills of every residential customer it serves.

Reiser said he based his decision on conclusions he reached from the testimony and exhibits entered in yesterday's hearing on Sherco 3. He said those conclusions meet the criteria necessary to issue a certificate of need.

As part of his decision, Reiser placed several important conditions on the three units. The conditions stem in part from the agreement they reached in June with the state and the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG), the group that had been challenging the need for Sherco 3.

For example, Reiser ordered that the plant be designed to permit extraction of hot water or steam if and when a market for such alternative forms of energy is developed in Minnesota.

He ordered NSP to evaluate the



produce such alternative forms of energy. Also, this ensures that they will take seriously the study of alternative energy; they have to report to us on these studies.

Reiser said a major issue in the Sherco 3 hearings was the total amount of sulfur dioxide that would be emitted from the plant and others in Minnesota. That pollution is one of the prime constituents of acid rain, a fact of our pollution.

"NSP based part of its case on the environmental benefits which would be derived from displacing electricity from its older coal-fired plants by electricity from Sherco 3," said Reiser. "The older plants are not equipped with modern pollution-control equipment."

Wayne Kaplan, an NSP spokesman, said, "It's gratifying that (Reiser) agreed with the hearing examiner that Sherco 3 is needed in 1988. It will provide reliable, reasonably priced electricity to more than 3 million Minnesotans. It also fits NSP's plans to further reduce emissions."

Phil Schneider, director of information for Southern Minnesota Electric

and Power Agency, said Reiser's decision "will benefit our ratepayers."

But he added, "I can't help but express a certain amount of dismay at the amount of work and money that goes into one of these hearings by people in our industry and in state government." Some modification of this system is going to have to be considered. Energy is too important to play politics with."

Two plead guilty in counterfeiting

Associated Press
Fargo, N.D. — Two former employees of the state hospital in Jamestown have changed their plea to guilty in a counterfeit-coin case.

Sharon Mages, 40, and J.L. Patterson, 28, pleaded guilty Thursday in U.S. District Court in Fargo.

Both had been indicted on four counts, but under a plea agreement they pleaded guilty to a charge of trying to pass four counterfeit \$20 bills and to charges of conspiracy.

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