

Allyn Kilsheimer, expert forensic engineer, on the exceptional circumstances surrounding his investigation of the Surfside, Florida condo collapse

Tim Rivers
29 July 2021

Expert forensic engineer Allyn Kilsheimer was hired by the town of Surfside, Florida on the same day that half of the Champlain Towers South fell to the earth killing 98 residents. He has been on location in Surfside with a team of engineers since then but has been denied access by county and state officials to the site of the catastrophe, as well as to the thousands of tons of material salvaged from it.

“I don’t understand who is making those decisions and how,” he said, explaining the critical importance of making a timely analysis of the collapse.

Kilsheimer received a BS in Civil Engineering from George Washington University in 1963 and has worked in the field from 1961 to the present. The website of his company KCE Structural Engineers PC describes why he is among the world’s leading experts in forensic engineering.

He has numerous awards for outstanding achievement and many professional associations of which he is currently a member. Of particular significance in this case, however, the website states:

Mr. Kilsheimer has been consulted over the last thirty-three years in his own practice as a forensic engineering expert on over one hundred matters involving investigation, analysis, arbitration and/or litigation including but not limited to such cases as the Skyline Towers, Crystal City, Van Ness Center, Stanford, French Chancery, Mathew Brady Studios, 22nd Street and Florida Avenue Embassy, 14th & H Street

and 1441 H Street, and for hundreds of catastrophic failure analysis, including numerous fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, structural damage by explosions and collapses or imminent collapses of buildings and or support structures throughout the United States and overseas, including the emergency recovery and restoration of the Pentagon after the September 11 attack.

Moreover, his expertise is highly regarded internationally. “His accomplishments include consultations on multiple projects throughout the world including in England, the USSR, Ukraine, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Barbados, Lebanon, Brunei, Ethiopia, Italy, Iceland, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Vietnam, Egypt and Portugal,” it states.

Last Tuesday evening, the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with Mr. Kilsheimer by phone at his hotel in Florida.

WSWS: I understand you felt you had to leave because you cannot get anything done there?

Alan Kilsheimer: That is not quite the case. I am going to leave at the end of this week because I cannot do the investigations at the site and the two storage facilities that I need to do. We are still doing all the calculations and all the models and things that are being done in Washington. I do not need to be down here to see that. So, I’ll be finished with what I can do down here at the end of the week, and I’m going to go back to Washington. And then when they are ready to let me

do what I have to do, we will be ready to come back.

WSWS: Can you tell us a little about what you would like to do right now?

AK: It's about a fourteen-page document... Essentially, I would like to get down on the site where they have everything cleared as I understand it, although I am not allowed down there. We need to do the geotechnical investigation of the foundation system. That is, we need to look at the slab in the basement and check the concrete strength and the reinforcing strength.

We need to look at the under-slab drainage if there is one. We need to expose the pile caps, check the pile caps, the reinforcing of the pile caps. Then we have to shoot what amounts to sound waves down the piles and the outside of the piles to check the soil and the rock to see what is existing below the rock.

Then we need to take cores down the piles to see the condition of the piles themselves. That is a two-month process, pretty much, to do it thoroughly. Then you have to dewater the site while you are doing it because at high tide water comes in and it rains here all the time.

At the off-site storage facilities, which I have not been allowed to see, one of them has the big pieces they took off the site, as I understand it.

And we need to do the same kinds of things there. But there is no soil, so we have to measure things and check the reinforcing and the concrete and figure out which piece came from where as best we can so you can put this puzzle back together.

In the area where you have all the smaller debris, I am not sure what we will see there. But we need to go there to see what we are going to see.

WSWS: I think I read a report that in all the investigations you have done throughout the country you never were denied access before. Is that the case?

AK: That is correct.

WSWS: How do you feel about that?

AK: Obviously, very frustrated. I do not understand. I do not understand who is making those decisions and how. I hear that the scene is considered a crime scene by the Miami-Dade Police, and I appreciate that. I do not quite understand, although I am not a crime scene expert, what is still down at the site that is still considered evidence and why I could not be there doing that.

I kind of understand why they do not want us at the—what I will call the small debris pile—because they are still looking for people and things and stuff like that. And I understand that. I do not exactly understand why we cannot measure and stuff at the big debris pile because it is just big pieces of concrete and steel that we want to be looking at.

They have to do their job. And I guess they know their job well. I have never run into this before, so it is just hard for me to understand how it could happen this way.

WSWS: One final question. I really appreciate you speaking to me. Do you believe that you can recreate this event, that you can determine why it came down?

AK: We have been able to do that in almost every single case before, and there is nothing that tells me that we should not be able to do that here. But until we continue the operation, there is no way to know.

WSWS: Thank you very much.

AK: You're welcome.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact