

**From:** Frank Berg  
**To:** Bloom, Jim; Lippert, Dick; Owens, Phil; Shaff, Leanna; Thomas, James  
**Date:** 10/21/2010 1:39 PM  
**Subject:** 516-520 Rice Street

**CC:** Zaccard, Steve  
This is to document my October 21, 2010, site visit.

I was alerted an hour prior to this visit to what Fire Inspector James Thomas had judged to be unstable floor framing. Inspector Thomas accompanied me to the site. We were joined while at the site by Fire Inspector Leanna Shaff. We were given access to the grade level floor and to the basement by the clerk tending the store. We were not accompanied by any store or building personnel during our walk-thru.

Areas of significantly soft floor structure were felt at numerous locations throughout the main level. From in the basement we observed the underside of these same areas as well as the underside of the floor framing overall. Decay to floor boards, joists, support girders, and girder to column support points was evident. We also observed twisted members, and at one area of well advanced decay to the floor boards we observed that a joist had been cut off, likely a number a years ago, doubling the span of the floor boards. In general, deterioration to the floor framing was evident throughout, and much advanced in many localized areas.

One steel post had been erected in the basement reportedly to address this hazzard. The location of the post, however, was such that although doing no harm, it served little purpose.

Heathy wood chars when exposed to flame, forming a cover that slows the rate of damage to the wood as the fire burns. Heathy wood within the charred layer has the capability of warning of failure.

**The condition of the wood, however, that comprises this floor framing has deteriorated well beyond that which would allow it to react to fire in that manner. The normal time period, whatever that is, that fire fighters are accustomed to for framing of wood construction cannot be relied upon until this hazzard has been eliminated. Or stated even more strongly, this floor framing in its current condition cannot be relied upon to absorb any additional distress, long term or short term.**

Any effort to address this hazzard must be performed under permit, and under the design and watchful eye of a licenced structural engineer.