

# Concrete Answers Needed

Statewide solution must be found now for crumbling foundations



By Steven Werbner, Town Manager of Tolland

**T**hirty-six towns in Central and Eastern Connecticut have homes that are experiencing crumbling foundations. The cause is a mineral called pyrrhotite in the concrete and

when exposed to water and air the concrete starts to expand and crack and will eventually crumble. The only solution is a complete replacement of the foundation at estimated costs between \$70,000 - \$300,000.

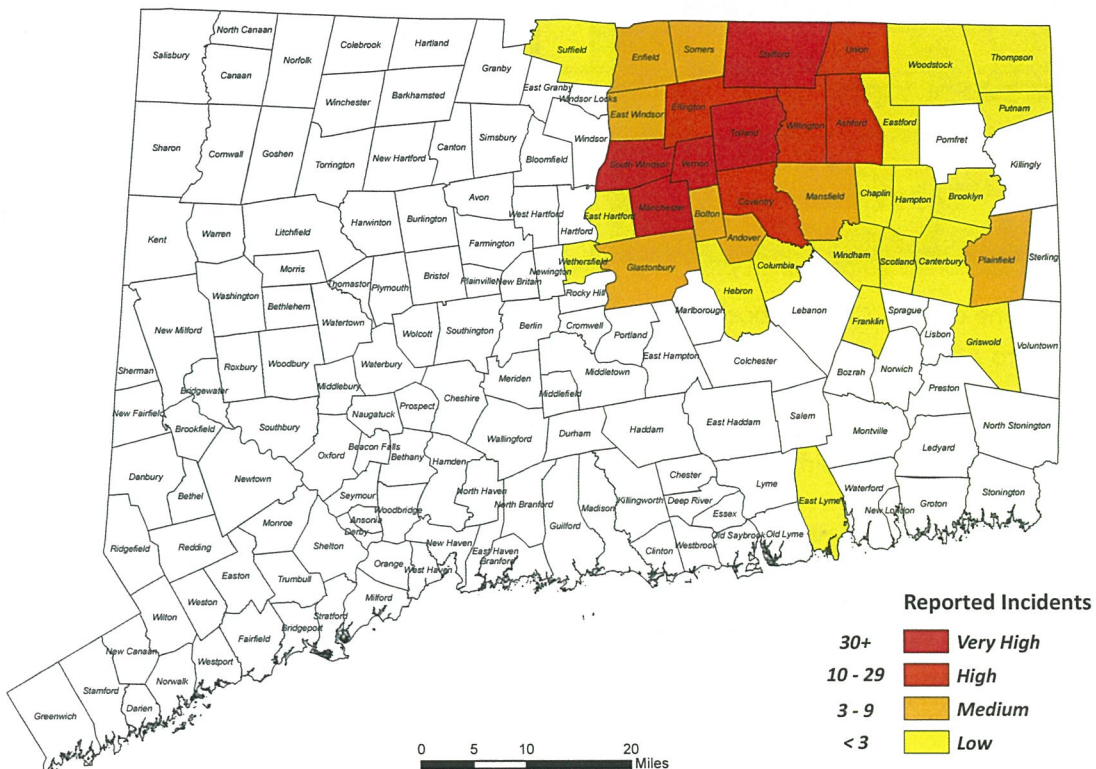
The pyrrhotite comes from a quarry in Willington, CT. Concrete from this quarry was used between 1983-2015 for many residential developments, including condominiums and Plan Unit Developments as well as commercial and retail establishments. It is estimated some 30,000 homes were constructed in that time period. There is currently no standard for the acceptable amount of pyrrhotite in concrete and this was not a known issue when the homes were built.

Currently over 500 homeowners have self-reported an issue with their foundation to the State Department of Consumer Protection. Many of these homeowners have also applied to their local assessors office for reduced assessments due to the deterioration. The scope of the number of homes affected is unknown, but addressing just the homes identified to date would cost \$75 million.

For the residents involved there is limited protection under homeowners policies and currently no assistance available from state or federal government for repairs. Due to the high cost of the repairs, many of the homes have less value than the cost of repairs. The problem is also affecting ability to sell property and the marketability of other properties due to the uncertainty of the long term condition of foundations.

The Capital Region Council of Governments, along with the Northeastern Council of Governments, has been working on this issue for months through an ad hoc committee chaired by Steven Werbner, Town Manager of Tolland. The committee has provided the legislators with draft legislation for a framework to provide homeowners with partial assistance and loan programs. In addition, the committee has been advocating for funds for remediation. Possible sources include: surcharges on insurance policies, various state funds including potentially portions of existing bonding authorization for programs like Brownfield remediation or STEAP, and continued pursuit of possible federal assistance.

This is a complex problem impacting potentially thousands of residences and will have a significant impact on the entire state's economy. Similar to how we would approach a natural disaster affecting hundreds or thousands of homes, a statewide solution must be found.



Data compiled from Town Assessors, Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, and the Connecticut Insurance Department. Map updated November 29th, 2016.