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E Belleville. St Clair 1N 8W

2/6/86

Subsidence From Old Mine Affects Dozen Homes

By Robert Goodrich
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Post 2/6

Cracks have appeared in about a dozen homes on Northern Drive and Southern Drive near west Belleville, the latest neighborhood affected by subsidence of an abandoned mine.

"It started about a week ago," Joseph J. Wagner of 7100 Northern Drive said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

The first indication of problems was low water pressure, he said. The line didn't break, but settling of the earth apparently interfered with the

flow, he said.

Illinois Power Co. crews and equipment then appeared.

"They're putting in new gas lines," Wagner said.

As a precaution, the company is replacing cast iron gas lines with plastic lines, which are more flexible and less likely to rupture in shifting ground.

Wagner said he had noticed only a few minor cracks in his home, built in 1953. The most serious damage has been suffered by his neighbors, starting next door and continuing south-

east along the street, he said.

Marcia Keefe of 7009 Northern Drive agreed.

"Our garage is completely detached from the house now by about an inch," she said. "The neighbors across the street are having some cracks and some problems with leaks in their basement."

Cracks are appearing inside her home, but so far none are large, Keefe said.

"I looked at my windows inside last night," she said. She noticed a new crack at the bottom of an upstairs

window. "It goes from the base of the window downward," she said.

Her home's concrete slab driveway also is damaged, she added. Some of the seams have separated and one slab has risen and another has subsided, leaving a crack.

"I'm hoping we don't get anything worse, but I just don't know what to expect," she said.

Bruce Schottel, an engineer for the Illinois Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Council, said the subsidence appeared to be a "sag" in the earth from a gradual collapse of an old

mine far underground.

"There's no way of knowing exactly what was the cause of the failure without doing any drilling," he said. "As the sag develops outward, it may affect more houses."

Similar damage has occurred in other areas. Because the abandoned mines are far beneath the surface, settling is gradual. Evacuation is required only if buildings eventually become so structurally damaged that they are unsafe or impractical to use.

Most of the area that lies beneath Belleville and several other Metro

East communities is honeycombed with abandoned coal mines.

A bill to provide subsidence damage insurance for area homeowners was pushed through the Legislature several years ago by then-State Rep. Celeste Stiehl, R-Belleville.

Subsidence coverage is now automatically added to homeowners insurance unless the owner specifically declines it. But it is limited to \$50,000. An increase in that limit has been discussed.

Most of the homes on Northern

Drive and Southern Drive are thought to be worth well over \$50,000.

Charles Penny of Stookey Township was work superintendent on a project by the U.S. Bureau of Mines to try to backfill some of the abandoned mines in Belleville and Maryville.

He said he had an underground map showing that the area under Northern and Southern drives was mined until 1937.

Handwritten notes: "This is appropriate", "More like appropriate", "Mark Keefe in notes" with an arrow pointing to the article.

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