

The Comanche County Courthouse will need repairs soon.

Ron Kirby, Central District Comanche County Commissioner, recently informed the Eastern and Western district commissioners and the Comanche County Excise Board about a sinking support pier and damaged beam under the street-level decking of the courthouse.

As Central District Commissioner, Kirby is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the courthouse.

Kirby received an engineer's report from J. Stephen Ford, of the Oklahoma City engineering firm Zahl-Ford Inc. Aug. 8.

"He did an on-site inspection," Kirby said. "It does need attention, regular maintenance over a period of time. But it is in no immediate danger of collapsing or anything else, from a structural standpoint."

Kirby ordered the engineer's inspection after county workers noticed the damage.

Kirby estimated the needed repairs will take about six weeks from the start time and cost about \$100,000.

He hopes to have the repairs made during the current fiscal year, even though the engineer said the problem was not immediate and the repairs needed to be made during the next couple of years. Kirby said he didn't want to take any chances with such a potentially important problem.

Similar repairs were made in 2006, in the same area of the decking, during the courthouse's approximately \$700,000 renovation project, Kirby said.

Different support piers and beams were replaced then because of sinking. Kirby said the engineer told him the recurring problem is due to a design flaw in the almost 37-year-old courthouse building.

He said workers will have to go in and replace a beam that is separating and probably the two piers on either side of the beam.

“If we get started on it right now, it won’t be a major problem,” said Kirby. “But if we let it linger for two or three years, it could be a major problem.”