Corvette Sinkhole\WKU response

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When a sinkhole swallowed eight corvettes at the National Corvette Museum just over a week ago, several WKU experts were called to the scene.

Amy Bingham talks to them in this week’s View from the Hill.

The WKU Engineering and Geology departments played a crucial role in assessing the sinkhole that gained international attention when it sunk America’s favorite sports cars.

It was the security camera footage seen around the world.

 “It’s unique to capture it. You don’t always see it when it happens. Sinkholes don’t usually get captured on a video.”

Sinkholes also don’t usually take eight corvettes down with them…. Which is what set this normally common occurance in south central Kentucky apart.

 “As sinkholes go it really wasn’t that different or uncommon, it was just where it was and the fact that it had corvettes in it that made it unique.”

Karst expert and geology professor Jason Polk was called to the scene shortly after the collapse and is still serving in an advising capacity.

 “Our role now is basically to try and help with some information about the collapse feature, some information and ways to remediate and fix it.”

Another video grabbing lots of attention in the first few hours was taken by this quad copter built and operated by WKU Mechanical engineering students.

 “We got to fly in and see how these cracks propagaded and we could see the throat of the sinkhole and see if they thought it was quite deep or expected to grow.”

Tinker says his team was running on pure adrenaline.

 “As Will said, it’s trial by fire. We had never flown it with the camera and it had been two months since he’d flown this thing because of winter break.”

 “It’s been a hot lecture topic since that day.”

WKU Civil engineering professor Matt Dettman has gotten a lot of mileage out of the sinkhole in the classroom.

 “Every class I teach has some sort of relationship to a sinkhole.”

Dettman has been involved in sinkhole repair in this area for more than 20 years. He was among several engineers on hand to access the structural integrity of the building.

A building that’s been a popular tourist attraction in our community for almost two decades.

WKU will continue to focus on education and awareness of sinkholes. The geology department has partnered with the city of Bowling Green on a karst and groundwater awareness website. Learn more about what’s under Bowling Green at underbgky.org.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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