

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WNMU MUSEUM ADJUSTS HOURS, ENTRANCE FOR VISITORS

Silver City, NM – A recent partial ceiling collapse at the main entrance of Fleming Hall is causing WNMU Museum visitors to enter the building at a North side entry on Alabama Street.

With the alternate entry located on the first floor at Alabama St., and the Museum Shop and permanent prehistoric Mimbres pottery exhibits located on the third floor, the multi-story nature of the University Museum combined with a staff shortage and security needs has resulted in the museum limiting its hours of operation until further notice. The new hours are published weekly and are posted at the University Museum, at various lodging establishments, Alotta Gelato, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Silver City Museum, and available online at www.Gilacommunity.net and under News at www.wnmu.edu.

The incident occurred while the WNMU Museum was closed on Wednesday, May 11. No staff or visitors were in the area and no one was injured. WNMU Maintenance workers cleaned the area of plaster on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning enabling the remaining ceiling to be secured and to prevent further collapse and damage to the building.

The WNMU Museum building, Fleming Hall, was constructed in 1916-1917. During construction, plaster ceilings and walls were installed throughout the University Museum. The University Museum building is on the New Mexico State Register of Historic Properties and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

“During inspection of the ceiling remnants last week by engineers, the University architect, and others, it was found that the ceiling collapse is due to plaster failure,” said WNMU Museum Director Dr. Cynthia Bettison. “The Main Entry Foyer ceiling was constructed 96 years ago by securing wire mesh to the 2 inch x 8 foot/10 foot joists with ½ inch staples.”

The plaster, consisting of quartz sand, and pig and horsehair, was applied to the wire mesh by hand and is up to 3 inches thick in some places.

The ceiling collapse caused significant damage to the eastern section of the University Museum’s wood grand staircase, splitting the banister in several locations and scraping/removing sections of wood in other areas. The recently refinished Main Entry

Foyer maple floor and east section of the foyer balcony floor were scraped and dented by failing plaster. A wall heater, installed in the 1960s, located on the east side of the foyer balcony near the Director's Office entrance, was pulled from the wall and destroyed. No water or steam from the steam heat system was released.

Hours for the week of Monday, May 23 through Monday, May 30:

- Tuesday, May 24: 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 24 and Thursday, May 25: 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Closed Friday, May 27 through Monday, May 30

Hours for the week of Tuesday, May 31 through Sunday, June 5:

- Tuesday, May 31 through Friday, June 3: 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Closed Saturday, June 4 and Sunday, June 5

For more information, please contact 575-538-6386.



Located in Silver City, New Mexico, Western New Mexico University has served the people of the state of New Mexico and its surrounding areas as a comprehensive, regional, rural, public coeducational university since 1893 and caters to a student body diverse in age, culture, language and ethnic background.

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