

# Cargo Ship Hits Baltimore's Key Bridge, Bringing It Down. Rescuers Are Looking for People in Water

A container ship has rammed into a major bridge in Baltimore, causing it to snap and plunge into the river below

By [Associated Press](#)

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**UNCREDITED**

Parts of the Francis Scott Key Bridge remain after a container ship collided with a support Tuesday, March 26, 2024 in Baltimore. The major bridge in Baltimore snapped and collapsed after a container ship rammed into it early Tuesday, and

several vehicles fell into the river below. Rescuers were searching for multiple people in the water. (WJLA via AP)

BALTIMORE (AP) — A container ship lost power and rammed into a major bridge in Baltimore early Tuesday, causing the span to buckle into the river below and plunging a construction crew and several vehicles into the dangerously cold waters. Rescuers pulled out two people, but six others were missing.

The ship's crew issued a mayday call moments before the crash took down the Francis Scott Key Bridge, enabling authorities to limit vehicle traffic on the span, Maryland's governor said.

The ship struck one of the bridge's supports, causing the structure to collapse like a toy. It tumbled into the water in a matter of seconds — a shocking spectacle that was captured on video and posted on social media. The vessel caught fire, and thick, black smoke billowed out of it.

With the ship barreling toward the bridge at “a very, very rapid speed,” authorities had just enough time to stop cars from coming over the bridge, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said.

“These people are heroes,” Moore said. “They saved lives last night.”

The crash happened long before the busy morning commute on the bridge that stretches 1.6 miles (2.6 km).

The six people still unaccounted for were part of a construction crew filling potholes on the bridge, said Paul Wiedefeld, the state's transportation secretary. One of those rescued was taken to a hospital, he said.

“Never would you think that you would see, physically see, the Key Bridge tumble down like that. It looked like something out of an action movie,” said Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott, calling it “an unthinkable tragedy.”



From 1960 to 2015, there were 35 [major bridge collapses](#) worldwide due to ship or barge collision, according to the World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure.

The collapse is almost sure to create a logistical nightmare for months, if not years, along the East Coast, shutting down ship traffic at the Port of Baltimore and snarling cargo and commuter traffic.

“Losing this bridge will devastate the entire area, as well as the entire East Coast,” state Sen. Johnny Ray Salling said.

Highway signs as far south as Virginia warned drivers of delays associated with the closure of the bridge.

Authorities said sonar had detected vehicles in the water, which is about 50 feet (15 meters) deep. The water temperature was about 47 degrees Fahrenheit (8 degrees Celsius) before dawn Tuesday, [according to a buoy](#) that collects data for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Earlier, Kevin Cartwright, director of communications for the Baltimore Fire Department, told The Associated Press that several vehicles were on the bridge at the time of the collapse, including one the size of a tractor-trailer truck. The bridge came down in the middle of night when traffic would be lighter than during the day when thousands of cars traverse the span.

Synergy Marine Group — which manages the ship, called the Dali — confirmed the vessel hit a pillar of the bridge at about 1:30 a.m. while in control of one or more pilots, who are local specialists who help navigate vessels safely into ports. The ship is owned by Grace Ocean Private Ltd.

Synergy said all crew members and the two pilots on board were accounted for, and there were no reports of any injuries.

The ship was moving at 8 knots, roughly 9 mph (14.8 kph), the governor said.

Jagged remnants of the bridge could be seen jutting up from the water's surface. The on-ramp ended abruptly where the span once began.

Donald Heinbuch, a retired chief with Baltimore's fire department, said he was startled awake by a deep rumbling that shook his house for several seconds. "It felt like an earthquake," he said.

He drove to the river's edge and couldn't believe what he saw.