

'Slow, deliberate' recovery work begins

by UPI

MINNEAPOLIS -- Minneapolis police Thursday lowered the death toll in the Interstate 35W bridge collapse to four people confirmed dead, down from seven reported earlier. The recovery effort began Thursday as crews searched wreckage and rubble left from the structure's falling into the Mississippi River and its banks during evening rush hour Wednesday. Officials said at least 20 people were missing. Scores of people were sent to area hospitals. "It's a slow, deliberate recovery operation," Hennepin County, Minn., Sheriff Rich Stanek said during a briefing. He said rescue crews and engineers inspected the scene to ensure it was safe before the operation began. Crews would use sonar, Global Positioning System tracking and other high-tech equipment in the search, he said. Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty told reporters U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters and members of the Minnesota congressional delegation would tour the scene after a briefing. The National Transportation Safety Board arrived in Minneapolis Thursday to begin its investigation into possible causes of the 40-year-old span's collapse. Federal officials said terrorism was not indicated. Minneapolis Police Chief Tim Dolan said at least 50 cars plummeted to the river. River currents meant the recovery operation would "take a long time," he said.

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