

Bridge debris slows investigation

by UPI

MINNEAPOLIS -- Fears of gridlock in the wake of last week's bridge collapse in Minneapolis evaporated Monday as investigators worked to determine why the structure failed. The Interstate 35W bridge, which served as a main traffic artery over the Mississippi River, collapsed Wednesday during the evening rush hour, killing at least five people and injuring 100 others. "Overall, I'm pretty encouraged by this morning's commute," Don Zenanko, a state transportation specialist who works in the metro area's Regional Transportation Management Center, told the St. Paul (Minn.) Pioneer Press. Commuters apparently left early for work and paid attention to the updates flashing on overhead screens. Though traffic was bumper-to-bumper, it was moving, Zenanko said. Investigators are gathering data round the clock in a race against the continued disintegration of the bridge, which linked north and south parts of Minneapolis, USA Today reported Monday. Eight people remain missing and no bodies have been recovered since Thursday because debris from the crumbling bridge continues to sink into the Mississippi River. The investigation could take up to 18 months as authorities try to determine the structure's weak points and how much weight was on the bridge, which held heavy construction equipment working on repairs when it collapsed.

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