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Important Baltimore Bridge Collapses Following Ship Collision

Authorities detour traffic as they respond to a catastrophic bridge collapse caused by a container ship

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The Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore after being hit by a large container vessel on Tuesday, March 26 2024.

The Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, Maryland collapsed during the early-morning hours of Tuesday, March 26 after being struck by a container ship. “All lanes closed both directions for incident on I-695 Key Bridge. Traffic is being detoured,” the Maryland Transportation Authority said.

Multiple vehicles were on the bridge when the accident occurred. “Our focus right now is trying to rescue and recover these people,” said Kevin Cartwright, director of communications for the Baltimore Fire Department. He described the situation as a “developing mass casualty event,” but said it was too early to determine how many people were on the bridge at the time of its collapse.

Rescue efforts have intensified with workers now focusing on locating between 7 and 20 construction workers believed to have been on the bridge at the time of the incident. The scope of the disaster expanded as details emerged about the vessel involved, the Singapore-flagged container ship Dali, which was en route from Baltimore to Sri Lanka when it struck a bridge column. The collision resulted in significant damage to the ship, including what is suspected to be a hull breach. Cartwright described the situation as a "developing mass casualty event."

The incident was first reported to emergency services around 1:30 a.m., with callers stating that a vessel departing from Baltimore had collided with a bridge column. At the time of the collision, several vehicles were present on the bridge.

In response to the emergency, Mayor Brandon M. Scott and Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski Jr. have confirmed that rescue operations are currently in progress, with emergency teams on site.

Authorities are still piecing together the events leading up to the collision. Preliminary investigations suggest the Dali may have lost power moments before the impact, although the exact cause remains under investigation.

At 4:15 a.m., rescue operations were still in full swing, with emergency responders working diligently against time to account for all missing individuals.