



AP Photo/Frank Kuin
Fire and police crew members work to clear the scene where a construction crane fell Saturday from a building on Google's new Seattle campus.

Fallen crane kills four in Seattle

Cause of collapse under investigation

By EVAN BUSH and NINA SHAPIRO
Seattle Times

Seattle's construction frenzy turned deadly Saturday afternoon when a tower crane working on a new Google campus fell like a thunderbolt from the roof of a South Lake Union building, smashing into six cars and killing four people.

Two ironworkers who were in the crane and two people in separate cars were dead by the time Seattle firefighters got to the site at Fairview Avenue North and Mercer Street around 3:30 p.m., fire officials said.

Sarah Wong, a freshman at Seattle Pacific University who was exploring a potential major in nursing, was in a car when the crane fell and was among the dead. Ironworkers Andrew Yoder and Travis Corbett were also killed, KING reported.

Four others were injured. The state Department

of Labor and Industries is investigating the cause of the accident. Several witnesses and the National Weather Service reported a storm squall with powerful gusting winds moved through the area at the time the crane was being dismantled, then toppled.

"It was terrifying," said Esther Nelson, a biotech research assistant who was working in a building nearby and saw the crane fall from a break-room window.

"I looked up. The wind was blowing really strong," she recalled. She saw boats struggling on Lake Union. Then the crane — she estimated it was maybe eight or nine stories high — broke in half.

"Half of it was flying down sideways on the building," she said. "The other half fell down on the street, crossing both lanes of traffic."

It was the first fatal tower crane collapse in more than a dozen years in the Seattle area, during a period of remarkable growth with skyscrapers sprouting up

and cranes dotting the skyline. Much of that construction explosion has occurred in the South Lake Union neighborhood.

Seattle activated its emergency operations center Saturday afternoon to coordinate the response. Police interviewed witnesses at the nearby Even Hotel.

"This is a tragic day in Seattle with this catastrophic incident in the heart of our city," Mayor Jenny Durkan said in a statement. "My heart breaks for those who lost loved ones today, and we are praying for strength for those injured."

Among them were Deyan Cashmere, 20, of Australia, who was in Seattle for cancer care at nearby Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. He was with his father, Eric, 48, and the pair of them had noticed hours before the collapse that the crane was being dismantled. To him, it appeared to be leaning.

"I thought it was going to fall," Deyan Cashmere said. "It was at an angle. It wasn't standing upright."

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