

TRAGEDY IN SURFSIDE

How the Miami Herald covered the breaking news
of the collapse of Champlain Towers South





PROVIDED TO THE MIAMI HERALD

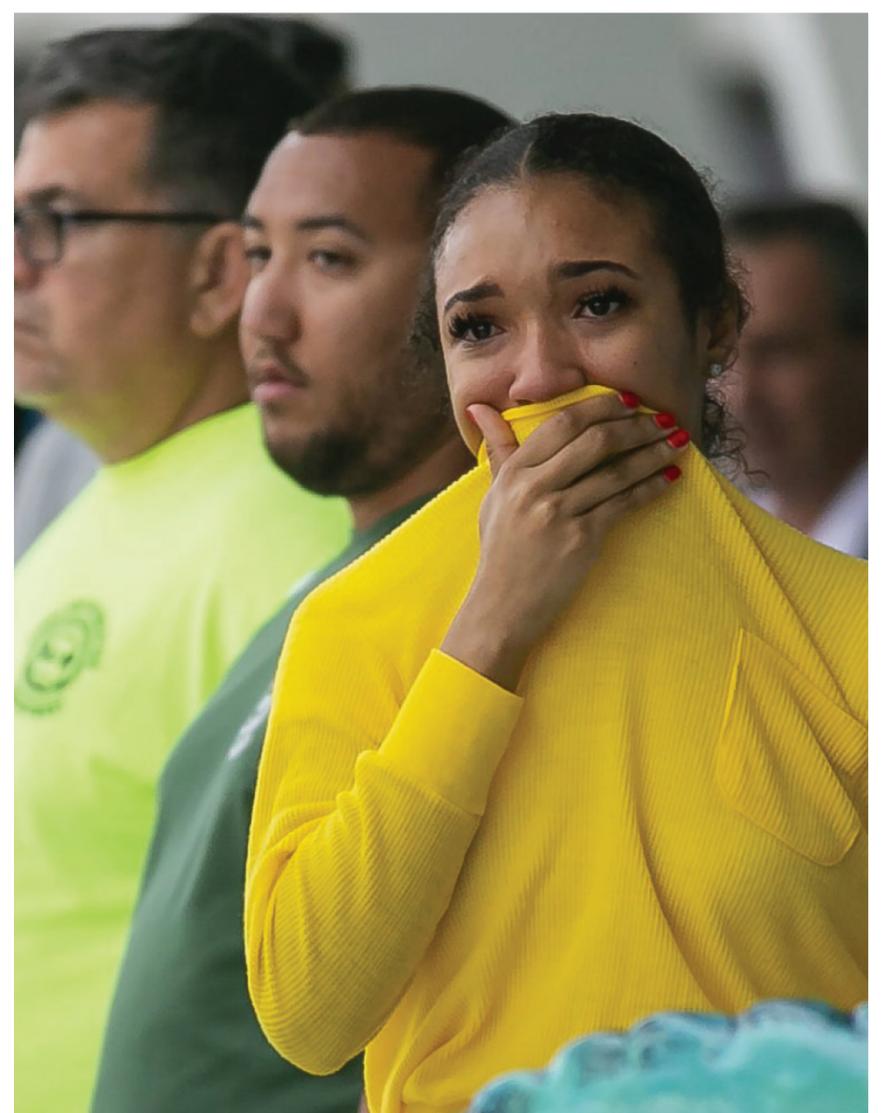
The text alert came from Miami-Dade Rescue shortly after 2 a.m.: “Miami Beach, FL (Miami-Dade County)| Mass Casualty| Collins Av| MBFR o/s Of A High Rise Collapse Level 5 MCI Multiple Patients M/A:Broward County M/A:Hallandale Beach| 02:11.”

Another came four minutes later: “multiple patients” and a request for “all available resources.”

Miami Herald Day Editor Jeffrey Kleinman, an early riser, was monitoring his phone and immediately began rousting reporters and photographers out of bed. First on the scene was Joey Flechas, who encountered an apocalyptic scene of blinking red and blue lights, shocked onlookers, wailing sirens, a layer of finely pulverized concrete covering everything and a phalanx of police and firefighters.

The first story went up at 3:21 a.m., with updates throughout the predawn hours. The Herald was the first outlet to post the news and alert it through phone, email and desktop, as well as post on social media.

Here is how the Herald staff covered the breaking news of the collapse of Champlain Towers South on June 24, 2021.



MATIAS J. OCNER | MIAMI HERALD

June 24, 2021: 'Mass Casualty, High Rise Collapse'

■ **2:11 a.m.** “Mass Casualty, High Rise Collapse,” reads a scanner transcript that pops in overnight to the Miami Herald newsroom, when most others are asleep. But news desk editor **Jeff Kleinman**, often the first monitoring overnight news, immediately recognizes the ominous report. He calls police and fire sources to confirm it.



KLEINMAN

■ **2:45 a.m.** “Every cop in Miami-Dade County is down there,” Kleinman tells reporter **Joey Flechas**, who lives 16 blocks from the collapse and sends him to the scene.



FLECHAS

■ **3:21 a.m.** While Flechas is driving, Kleinman confirms the scanner information and the Miami Herald becomes the first news source to report the news that a 12-story condominium has collapsed in Surfside, Florida. The Herald alert goes out to a sleeping world via push notifications on phones, email alerts and social media posts on Twitter and Facebook. This url would become the main writethrough for the staff, where the number of 99 feared missing is first reported.



HIRSCH

■ **4:38 a.m.** Flechas, who has made it to within a block of the collapsed building, files the first onlooker accounts to Kleinman, who like the rest of the Herald staff is working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



WILSON

■ **5 a.m.** Flechas is interviewing Santos Mejil, 50, who is standing behind police tape, when his phone rings. Mejil has been waiting to hear from his wife who was staying overnight with a disabled woman she cares for in the part of the tower that is still standing. “They’re bringing you down?” he said into the phone to his wife. “Thank God.” He wiped tears from his eyes with his T-shirt. Flechas updates his story.



HARRIS

■ **5:45 a.m.** Managing Editor **Rick Hirsch** and Senior Editor **Dave Wilson** talk by phone and start planning coverage. The first tasks: Wake up more reporters, get them rolling and find an anchor to compile the feeds from the field into a cohesive narrative story. By 6:30 a.m. more reporters who live nearby are heading to the scene, **Alex Harris** is anchoring the story, **Douglas Hanks** is headed to the trauma unit at Jackson Memorial Hospital and others are mobilizing.

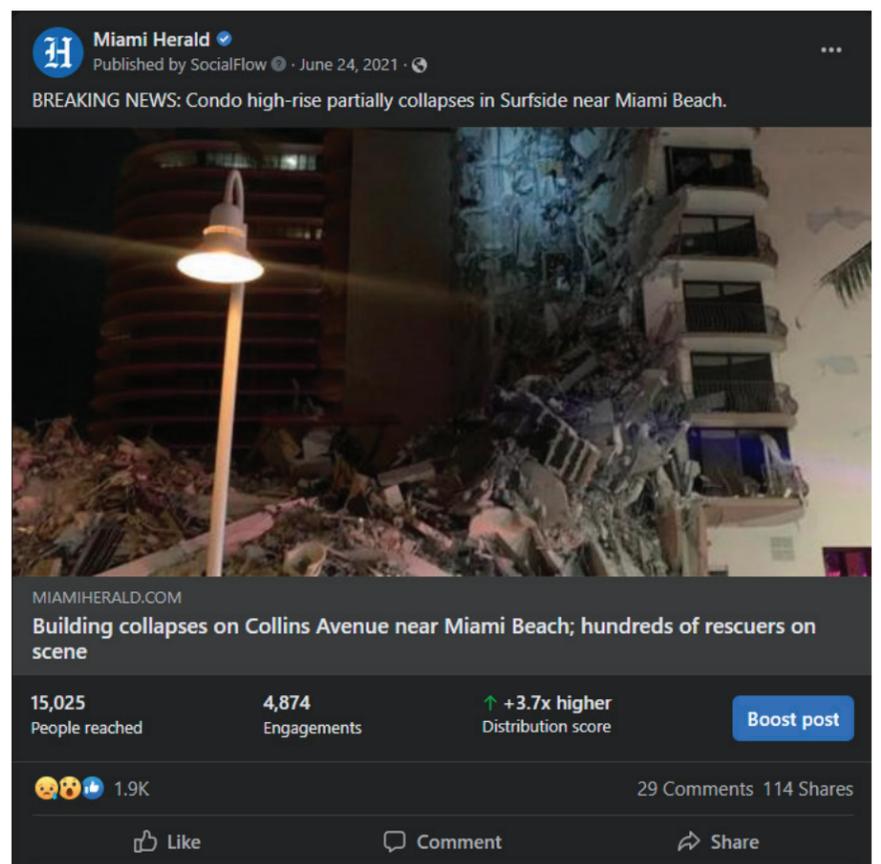


HANKS

■ **6:40 a.m.** By the time Harris first posts the main story with her updates and write-through in it, Kleinman and Flechas had posted and reposted the story more than 40 times with their early details. Harris later hands off the anchor duties to **Daniel Chang** at 2 p.m. In all, the main story is updated and reposted 106 times between 3:21 a.m. and 11:34 p.m., including 67 times



CHANG



before 9 a.m. as the early accounts, photos and videos rolled in. Reporters file their feeds via email to a special email address the Herald uses for coverage of big, breaking news stories.





DAVID SANTIAGO | MIAMI HERALD



SANTIAGO



FRANK



CHRISOS

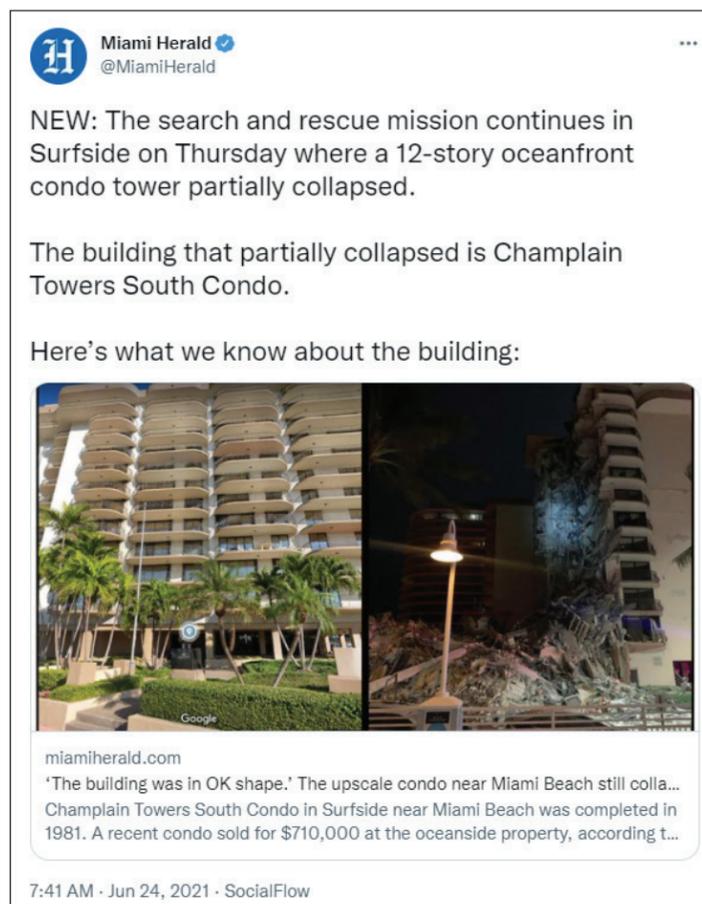
Daylight reveals the extent of the destruction

■ **7:16 a.m.** The first staff photo of the scene is taken from the beach by Herald photographer **David Santiago**. The visual staff would later shoot from boats offshore, balconies and drones.

■ **7:30 a.m.** Hirsch convenes a video conference with editors. From that meeting a three-pronged approach to coverage emerges: Wilson runs the daily coverage already in action; Investigations Editor **Casey Frank** runs reporting on the forensics of how and why the collapsed occurred; Health and Education Editor **Joan Chrissos** assembles a team to report and write the stories of those missing and those confirmed to have died. By the time this team is done, it will have written the obituaries of all 98 who were lost.

■ **7:33 a.m.** At a time many in Miami were still waking up, a team of reporters led by **Rene Rodriguez** and **Rebecca San Juan**, with help from **Taylor Dolven** and **Michelle Marchante**, publish the first narrative history of the tower, from \$200,000 payments by developers to the first news the tower was having extensive repairs to its roof as part of its 40-year certification for insurance purposes. The story encompassed first-person interviews, property records, county records and real estate experts.

■ **8:14 a.m.** The Herald posts a story with hotline numbers for the families of missing loved ones who live or work at Champlain Towers to notify officials of who might be safe and to create a total tally of the number of people missing. It helps officials build a framework for the number of still-missing people.



RODRIGUEZ



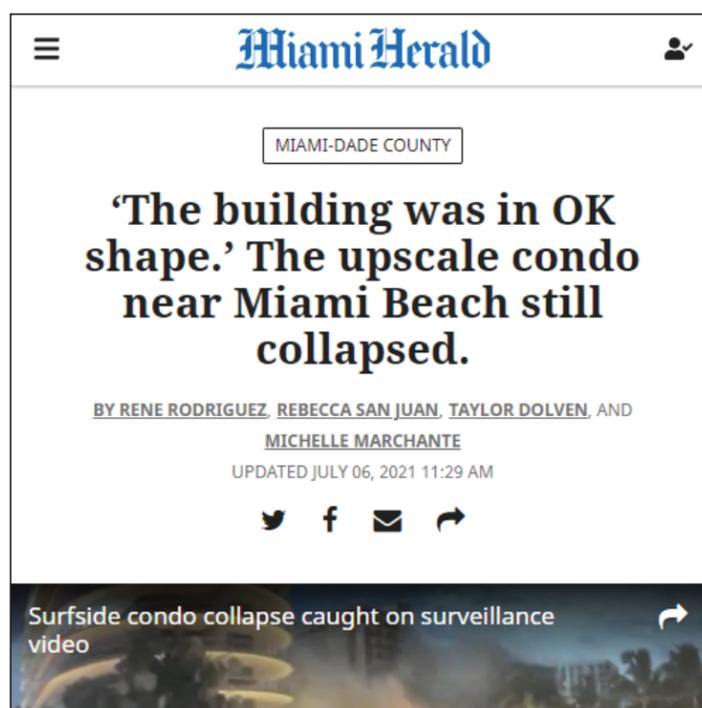
SAN JUAN



DOLVEN



MARCHANTE



Miami Herald

HOME CORONAVIRUS NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS REAL ESTATE

CONDO COLLAPSE NEAR MIAMI BEACH

LATEST NEWS

[Here's what we know about Champlain Towers South, the Surfside building that collapsed](#)

UPDATED 40 MINUTES AGO

Hotline and community center set up to reunite families at condo collapse in Surfside

UPDATED 13 MINUTES AGO

Here's how the condo collapse near Miami Beach will worsen rush hour traffic

UPDATED 7 MINUTES AGO

Condo collapse in Surfside kills at least one; search and rescue combing through rubble



A portion of Champlain Towers South Condo in Surfside collapsed early Thursday morning. Miami-Dade Fire Rescue is combing through the rubble for survivors and victims. DAVID SANTIAGO DSANTIAGO@MIAMIHERALD.COM



CONARCK



RABIN



CETOUTE

Miami Herald

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Condo collapse live updates: Senator sees rescue crews pull bodies pulled from rubble

BY MICHELLE MARCHANTE AND DEVOUN CETOUTE
UPDATED JULY 06, 2021 11:38 AM

Surfside condo collapse caught on surveillance video



0:25

A surveillance camera from a nearby building caught the exact moment part of Champlain Towers South collapsed on June 24, 2021. BY TWITTER

6/25/2021: Click here for [new updates on the Surfside building collapse](#).

Read original article below:

Rescue crews are continuing to search through the rubble for survivors after a 12-story oceanfront condo tower partially collapsed early Thursday in Surfside, just north of Miami Beach.

■ **8:35 a.m.** Reporter **Ben Conarck** reports via text message that he overheard city of Surfside employees discussing the Herald's public records request for city inspection records of Champlain Towers South. "They're not happy" about our request, Conarck writes.

■ **8:44 a.m.** Crime writer **Charles Rabin** reports on the first person freed from the rubble, later identified as 15-year-old Jonah Handler, and his mother, who would not survive her injuries.

■ **8:50 a.m.** Video of rescuers pulling 15-year-old Jonah Handler from the rubble is posted to the Herald website and Instagram.

■ **9:03 a.m.** The first posts of a live, running blog of news from Surfside are compiled by Marchante and **Devoun Cetoute** from reporters' emailed feeds and information they gather themselves. The last post on this file was made at 12:24 a.m. Friday, 23 hours after the collapse. A new blog file is started each day while the search and recovery mission continues at the site.

Miami Herald @MiamiHerald

NEW: Rescuers were desperately trying to get to a trapped child who was discovered by a rescue dog out of the garage at the Champlain Towers shortly after 8 a.m. Thursday.



miamiherald.com
At grim scene, rescuers still hold sliver of hope to find survivors in condo ruins
As dawn broke Thursday, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue crews searching an unstable two-story high pile of concrete rubble and twisted, jagged steel pulled out a ...

8:54 AM · Jun 24, 2021 · SocialFlow

9 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 20 Likes

miamiherald • Following

miamiherald • Boy rescued from rubble after condo collapses in Surfside

A boy is seen getting pulled from the rubble by firefighters after part of Champlain Towers South Condo in Surfside, near Miami Beach, collapsed around 2 a.m. June 24. Just after 8 a.m., Frank Rollason, director of Miami-Dade Emergency Management, said emergency workers believe they have cleared all survivors from inside the tower. Get the latest updates on the condo collapse here: trib.al/uBCRts2

30w

..kvyss Poor baby . Just imagine how traumatized he is 😭😭

49,234 views
JUNE 24, 2021

0:24 / 1:48

Add a comment... Post

Reporters from neighborhood are on the scene

9:09 a.m. Reporters who live blocks from the tower publish the first account of victims' families, who have arrived at a makeshift reunification center at the nearby Surfside Community Center desperate for information about their missing loved ones. **Samantha Gross**, who took the first published photos with her cell phone, combines first-hand accounts with Conarck, who walked 15 blocks past closed streets to the center and is later spelled by **Bianca Padró Ocasio**. "You can imagine the horrible anguish, because you don't know ... if she's under the debris, if she's alive, if she isn't," said Luz Marina Peña, who held up a photo of her missing aunt.

12:27 p.m. Summer reporting intern **Marie-Rose Sheinerman** files a feed after interviewing Soriya Cohen. Her husband, surgeon Brian Cohen, and brother-in-law, also a physician, had stayed at Champlain Towers South with their ailing father the night before. They were missing. The sons and their father would be among the victims. Sheinerman, who was sent first to Jackson Memorial Hospital and then to the Surfside Community Center, wasn't the only Herald intern who participated in the Surfside reporting.

1:17 p.m. Chrissos emails her team that is working on profiling the missing and deceased with instructions and examples from previous times the Herald did this after mass-casualty events (mass shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland and Pulse nightclub in Orlando).



Miami Herald ✓
@MiamiHerald

REUNIFICATION HOTLINE: A reunification hotline and center have been set up to reunite families with loved ones from Champlain Towers South, the oceanfront building in Surfside that partially collapsed early Thursday.



miamiherald.com

'You can imagine the horrible anguish' — families searching for Surfside loved ... Luz Marina Peña, whose 77-year-old aunt is missing in the Surfside condo collapse, had been waiting outside the family reunification center since 5 a.m. ...

8:18 AM · Jun 24, 2021 · SocialFlow

69 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 48 Likes

Miami Herald

HOME CORONAVIRUS NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS REAL ESTATE

CONDO COLLAPSE NEAR MIAMI BEACH

CONDO COLLAPSE

Condo collapse in Surfside kills at least one; search and rescue combing through rubble

UPDATED 15 MINUTES AGO

Rescuers rush to free trapped child in Surfside building collapse; Parents missing

UPDATED 16 MINUTES AGO

Hotline and community center set up to reunite families of condo collapse in Surfside

UPDATED 17 MINUTES AGO

CONDO COLLAPSE

Condo collapse live updates: Families await loved ones at community center in Surfside



Part of Champlain Towers South Condo at 6777 Collins Ave., collapsed around 2 a.m. on June 24, 2021. [VIEW MORE PHOTOS](#)



"My heart is aching": Horrified nation awakes to Florida condo collapse

UPDATED 25 MINUTES AGO



Like a bomb went off: Photos show tragic aftermath of condo collapse near Miami

UPDATED 15 MINUTES AGO



Here's what we know about Champlain Towers South, the Surfside building that collapsed

UPDATED 14 MINUTES AGO



Miami Herald ✓
Published by SocialFlow · June 24, 2021 ·

Experts watching the photos of the dramatic event already were scratching their heads: This just does not happen, one said. Buildings are not designed to collapse this way. We agree. So what happened here, asks the Miami Herald Editorial Board.



MIAMIHERALD.COM

Why did Surfside condominium collapse? And who is to blame for this deadly tragedy? | Editorial

23,189 People reached 4,952 Engagements +5.4x higher Distribution score [Boost post](#)

133 101 Comments 49 Shares



GROSS



PADRO OCASIO



Miami Herald ✓
Published by SocialFlow · June 24, 2021 ·

Help guide our coverage by asking us your remaining questions about anything related to the condo collapse in Surfside near Miami Beach. A reporter will reach out to you before using any information you share with us



MIAMIHERALD.COM

Do you have more info on the Surfside condo collapse? Share your tips, ask us questions



SHEINERMAN



LEAL



ORTIZ-BLANES



HALL



VASSOLO



BRASILEIRO



OCNER



PITCHON



WILE

BREAKING NEWS

LATEST NEWS

Condo collapse live updates: American Red Cross helping displaced survivors

UPDATED 53 MINUTES AGO

As Surfside search efforts continue, DeSantis warns 'We're bracing for some bad news'

UPDATED 41 MINUTES AGO

Weeping families frantically searching for information at Surfside reunification center

UPDATED 9 MINUTES AGO

COLLAPSE

Condo collapse in Surfside kills at least one; search and rescue combing through rubble



Fire rescue personnel conduct search and rescue with dogs in the rubble at Champlain Towers South Condo in Surfside, located at 8777 Collins Avenue, a part of which collapsed in the early morning in Surfside, Florida, Thursday, June 24, 2021. DAVID SANTIAGO/DSANTIAGO@MIAMIHERALD.COM



Rescuers rush to free trapped child in Surfside building collapse. Parents missing

UPDATED 40 MINUTES AGO



Condo collapse should serve as urgent alert that old Florida structures need auditing | Opinion

UPDATED 40 MINUTES AGO



'Like a bomb went off.' Photos show tragic aftermath of condo collapse near Miami

UPDATED 12 MINUTES AGO

Communities within the condo community

■ **4:51 p.m.** At least 36 people from Latin American nations — including Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Cuba, Chile, Paraguay and Argentina — are among those reported missing, the Herald reports with research by **Monika Leal** that leads to the first profiles of those lost. Interviews were woven together by writers **Syra Ortiz-Blanes**, **Kevin G. Hall**, Ocasio, **Martin Vassolo**, **Adriana Brasileiro** and Gross. Ortiz-Blanes is reporting from Puerto Rico, where she would later write an obituary on an entire extended family from the island lost in the collapse.

■ **5:07 p.m.** A video of families pleading for information on lost loved ones posts by visual journalist **Matias Ocner**.

■ **7:11 p.m.** In addition to the many residents and visitors from Latin America and the Caribbean, many of the missing were part of Surfside's large Jewish community, particularly the nearby Shul of Bal Harbour. A feed from Sheinerman described the shul's efforts to aid the community.

Miami Herald @MiamiHerald

A special edition of the Miami Herald's eEdition was updated with four pages of coverage on the partial collapse of the 12-story Champlain Towers South Condo in Surfside and the ongoing search for 99 missing people.

Read it all here: eedition.miamiherald.com/ccidist-replic...

SPECIAL EDITION: CONDO COLLAPSE

Miami Herald

DISASTER IN SURFSIDE

One confirmed dead, 99 missing, many more fatalities feared after condominium building Champlain Towers partially collapses early Thursday in Surfside

View of damage at Champlain Towers South Condo, at 8777 Collins Ave. in Surfside. The building partially collapsed early Thursday.

Chief fires Miami's most powerful police couple. They vow to fight for their jobs

Kids' mental-health crisis collides with staff shortages

'You can imagine the horrible anguish' as families wait, worry

4:56 PM · Jun 24, 2021 · TweetDeck

'The apartments were gone.'

■ **8:14 p.m.** 'The apartments were gone.' In a sweeping story 16 hours in the making, Flechas, with feeds from Gross, **Allie Pitchon** and **Rob Wile**, publishes the first narrative of the collapse, beginning with a man who opens his front door six floors up and finds a dust-filled night sky where his neighbors should have been. The story weaves first-person testimony of people on different floors of the remaining structure to create a picture of the terrible sound that awoke them "like a crash of thunder." Flechas and Wile were unknowingly interviewing the husband and wife in that apartment and that led to the lead of this forceful recreation.

■ **Overnight:** As the first day of coverage ends, it's clearer than ever that there is much work for the Herald team ahead. Who lived in Champlain Towers South and what are their stories? What happened to this building by the sea to make it fall down? Who is responsible and what will be done to make sure it doesn't happen again?

THE DAY AFTER

June 25, 2021: The first victims are named

■ **5:29 a.m.** The print edition containing the first day's coverage hits Twitter while it was also hitting driveways across South Florida.

■ **6 a.m.** The second day of reporting starts before dawn, and we continue starting reporting shifts at the scene at 6 a.m. for a couple of weeks. Early morning hours are a good time to gather color, speak to people in the morning quiet and be there to see what might appear new from the day before.

■ **7:18 a.m.** Anchored by Harris, 10 other reporters combine efforts to report a story that includes the first casualty named, Stacie Fang, 54 — the mother who was pulled from the rubble with her 15-year-old son, only to die from her injuries at Aventura Hospital, where writers were stationed. We hear the chilling first account of a man, Mike Stratton, who was traveling but got a call from his wife, Cassandra, when the building shook. She was on the phone with him when the building fell, he told reporter Dolven.



NEW: The heartbreaking task of recovering the bodies of victims at the site of the condo collapse in Surfside began overnight and continued into Friday morning.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said authorities have now confirmed 4 deaths.



miamiherald.com
Number of missing in Surfside condo collapse rises to 159, Miami-Dade mayor ...
The grim task of recovering the bodies of victims at the site of the collapse of the Champlain Towers South condo in Surfside began overnight and continued into...

7:30 AM · Jun 25, 2021 · SocialFlow

■ **Throughout the day:** Reporters feed notes into one main story, where readers can return for updated information. This is where we first learn of an informal vigil at the family reunification site 24 hours after the building partially collapsed. A gust of wind and rain forces people seated outside the center to take refuge under the building's central walkway.

Also within that story, we learn the following, through individual reporters contributing:

- President Biden signs an order declaring a disaster in Florida and authorizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide financial and logistical support to local officials and individuals.
- The federal agency that investigated the Florida International University bridge collapse in 2018 is on the scene hours after the Surfside building fell.
- Late Thursday, a lawyer representing a proposed class of Champlain Towers South homeowners files a lawsuit in Miami-Dade Circuit Court, claiming the condo association failed "to secure and safeguard the lives and property" of lead plaintiff Manuel Drezner and other residents.

Miami Herald @MiamiHerald

Good morning, South Florida. Here is Friday's front page. Keep up with the news at [MiamiHerald.com](https://miamiherald.com) ... And subscribe to support local coverage: trib.al/ZffMrYq

5:29 AM · Jun 25, 2021 · SocialFlow

56 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 88 Likes

FLgirl47 @Lgirl47F · Jun 25, 2021
Replying to @MiamiHerald and @brianstelter
How truly horrifying and devastatingly sad for those lost and their families. Deepest condolences on this tragic loss.

Linda A Seward @seward_linda · Jun 25, 2021
Replying to @MiamiHerald and @brianstelter
Jesus!!!

NewG @Obs509 · Jun 25, 2021
Replying to @MiamiHerald and @brianstelter
Ah, it's not a good morning.

Dena @DenaLSmith · Jun 25, 2021
Replying to @MiamiHerald
The AC units hanging! 😞 terrible

MxedChiq @MxedChiq · Jun 25, 2021
Replying to @MiamiHerald
That desk chair and bunk beds, upright, untouched. To think, if only that resident was sitting on that chair or slept on that bed, they might've survived this catastrophe. For that reason, this photo haunts me.

Show more replies

HEARTBREAK

Number of missing in Surfside condo collapse rises to 159, Miami-Dade mayor says



Family and friends wait for updates at the reunification center set up at 9301 Collins Ave. in Surfside during the search-and-rescue operation after the partial collapse of the Champlain Towers South on Thursday, June 24, 2021. ALEXIA FODERÉ FOR MIAMI HERALD



After the collapse of Surfside's Champlain tower: a day of dread, helplessness, heroism

UPDATED 9 HOURS 16 MINUTES AGO



'This is a gut-wrenching scene.' How to help victims of the Surfside condo collapse

UPDATED 2 HOURS 42 MINUTES AGO



DeSantis signs emergency order, allowing for federal aid in Surfside condo collapse

UPDATED JUNE 24, 2021 09:22 PM



REYES



OGLE



FRANQUIZ



TEPROFF

SURFSIDE CONDO COLLAPSE | Miami Herald

The Miami Herald is gathering names and stories of those who have been reported missing after the collapse.

You can find the list of names at the link in our bio. We'll continue to update the list.

Please send information to jchrisos@miamiherald.com or areyes@miamiherald.com.

miamiherald • Following
Surfside, Florida

miamiherald • The search continues Friday for missing people believed to still be trapped in the rubble of the partially collapsed Champlain Towers South condo building in Surfside. Families across the world wait for news about loved ones who are unaccounted for.

The @miamiherald is gathering the names and stories of those who have been reported missing after the building collapse. You can find a list of names at the link in our bio.

We will continue to keep updating this list. Please send information to jchrisos@miamiherald.com or areyes@miamiherald.com.

877 likes
JUNE 25, 2021

Add a comment... Post

Database of the missing and victims is created

■ **12:54 p.m.** The missing are given faces in a published database of all the missing, updated with profiles of each person as writers are able to connect with relatives. Those profiles would later prove to be obituaries that the Herald was able to write for every person killed in the collapse. Editors Chrissos and **Amy Reyes** begin collecting the data for reporter **Connie Ogle** to anchor while developer **Albert Franquiz** builds the database.

■ **5:28 p.m.** Shabbat, observed sundown Friday through sundown Saturday, is a particularly poignant topic handled in a story by Gross, **Carli Teproff** and Sheinerman. The writers tell how this disaster is being felt as far away as Israel.

MIAMI BEACH

Here are the names and stories of the missing and dead in Surfside condo collapse

BY TAYLOR DOLVEN AND CONNIE OGLE
UPDATED JULY 02, 2021 11:08 AM

Miami-Dade County identified the final known victim of the Surfside condo collapse, capping more than a month of recovering bodies and remains of the missing from the rubble of the Champlain Towers South complex. Here's a list of those who died. BY MIAMI HERALD

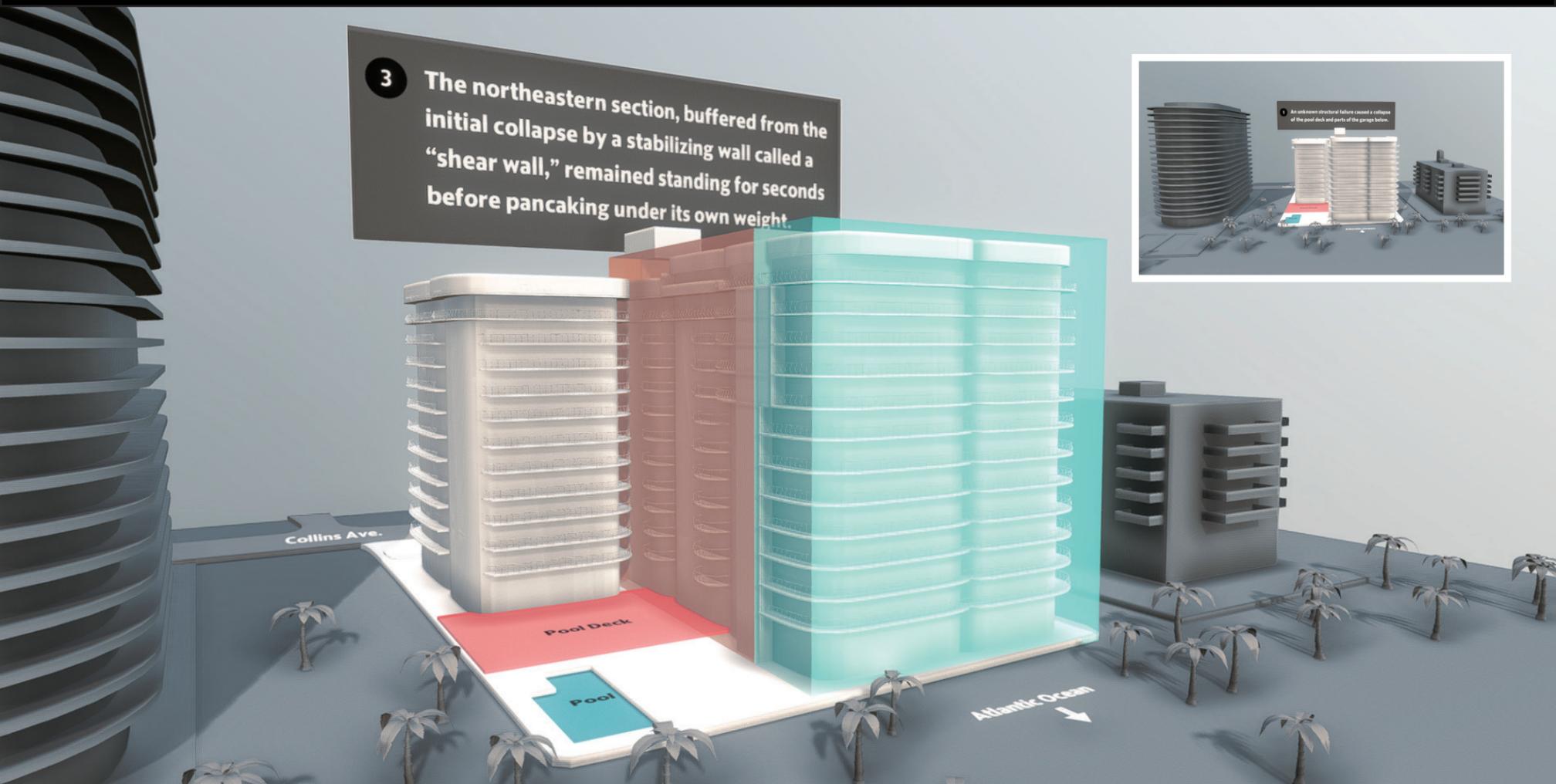
The Miami Herald is gathering the names and stories of those who have been reported missing after the building collapse as well as those who have been confirmed as deceased. You can search by name and filter the missing and the recovered. The Herald will keep updating this list. Please send information to jchrisos@miamiherald.com or areyes@miamiherald.com.

PEOPLE REPORTED MISSING AND DEAD IN SURFSIDE CONDO COLLAPSE

Name

SEARCH

Name	Story	Photo
Ingrid Ainsworth	Deceased. Recovered July 5, 2021. Age: 68. Ingrid Ainsworth was the mother of seven children and many grandchildren. "Every person she encountered, ever in her life, became her friend," her daughter Chana Wasserman wrote in a blog post.	
Tzvi Ainsworth	Deceased. Recovered July 5, 2021. Age: 68. Tzvi Ainsworth was a father of seven and grandfather to many. He and his wife Ingrid moved from Australia four years ago to be closer to family.	
Michael David Altman	Deceased. Recovered June 28, 2021. Age: 50. Michael Altman was an accountant who lived in the 1101 unit of the Champlain Towers South building for more than six years. The condo unit has been in the family since the 1980s. He was born in Costa Rica, but moved to the United States with his parents when he was around 4 years old. He has two sons, Nicholas Altman, 23, and Jeffrey, 22 who live in Boca Raton. "He was a warm man. He conquered a lot of obstacles in his life, and always came out on top," son Nicholas said. "He always inspired my brother and I to be successful in life."	
Richard (Dick) Augustine	Deceased. Recovered July 6, 2021. Age: 77. Richard Augustine, 77, is a Chicago native and lived on the top floor. He lived with his late wife's best friend, Elaine Sabino, who also died in the collapse.	
Marina Azen	Deceased. Recovered July 7, 2021. Age: 76. Marina Restrepo Azen, 76, was identified on July 10 as one of the victims of the collapse of Champlain Towers South in Surfside, according to Miami-Dade Police. She had been living there in unit 401 of the building in a two-bedroom apartment for the past 22 years.	
Luis Fernando Barth	Deceased. Recovered July 10, 2021. Age: 51. Luis Fernando Barth, 51, wife Catalina Gómez, 44, and 14-year-old daughter Valeria Barth from Colombia were visiting Miami to get their COVID-19 vaccinations; they had received their second doses and were ready to head home.	
Valeria Barth	Deceased. Recovered July 11, 2021. Age: 14. Luis Fernando Barth, 51, wife Catalina Gómez, 44, and 14-year-old daughter Valeria Barth from Colombia were visiting Miami to get their COVID-19 vaccinations; they had received their second doses and were ready to head home.	
Deborah Berezdivin	Deceased. Recovered July 7, 2021. Age: 21. Deborah Berezdivin was in Miami with her boyfriend, Ilan Naibryf.	
Luis Andres Bermudez	Deceased. Recovered June 26, 2021. Age: 26. A teacher from Bermúdez's high school called him "unforgettable." The 26-year-old had muscular dystrophy and was in a wheelchair, and family members have expressed concerns on social media that he cannot walk on his own. Bermúdez ran a clothing line that was sushi-themed, and said that he "loved sharing his art with the world." He is the son of Ana Ortiz, who went missing along with her husband Frankie Kleiman, mother-in-law Nancy Kress Levin, and brother-in-law Jay Kleiman.	
Elena Blasser	Deceased. Recovered July 5, 2021. Age: 64. Elena Chavez, 88, a travel agent, was staying at her daughter Elena Blasser's condo in the towers to keep her company while Blasser's husband was traveling in Panama. Blasser, 64, was an elementary and middle school teacher, then a school counselor and a vice principal in schools throughout Miami-Dade. The mother/daughter pair, who fled Cuba during Castro's revolution, are close, sharing a passion for travel.	



The investigation begins: I-Team finds ‘major error’

In the first five days, the Herald forensic team uncovers a history of damage, neglect, and inaction and works with engineers to explain how the building collapsed.

JUNE 24

■ **6:05 a.m.** The Herald investigations team is deployed. Reporters **Sarah Blaskey**, **Aaron Leibowitz** and Conarck, are tasked with understanding the engineering behind why the tower fell, and who — if anyone — was to blame.

■ **7:29 a.m.** Redubbed the forensic team, the reporters submit the first records request for the tower’s inspection and deficiency reports to the town of Surfside.

■ **4:48 p.m.** The first investigative story is published detailing the engineering of reinforced concrete structures, how they can fail, and what policies are supposed to prevent such events.

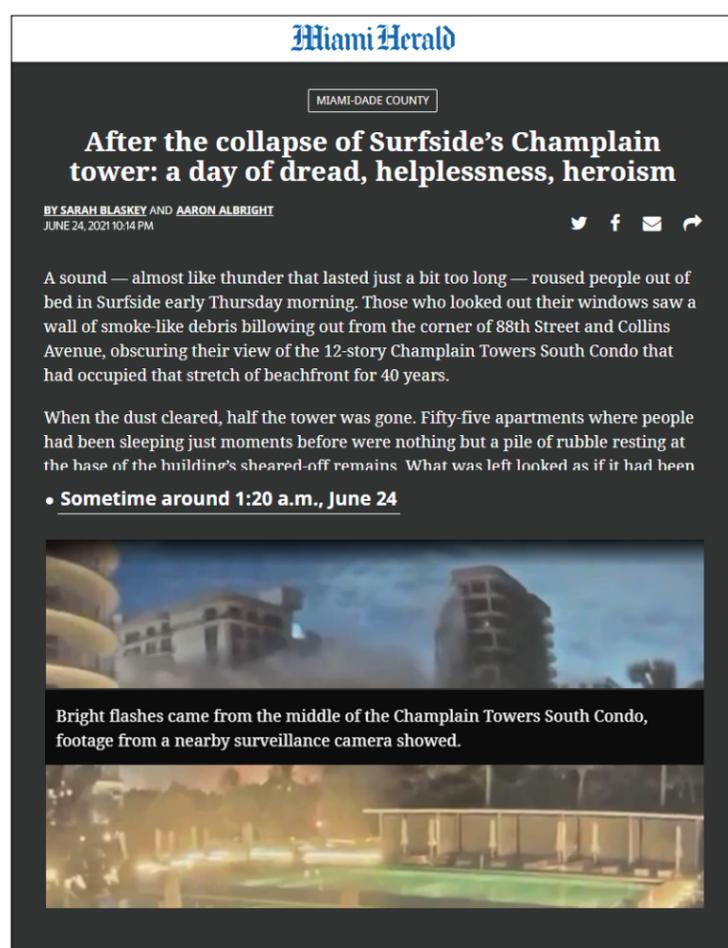
■ **10:14 p.m.** A scrolly-telling article built by experience designer **Aaron Albright** in collaboration with the forensics team shows what was known by the end of the first day.

JUNE 25

■ **10:36 p.m.** Buried under an avalanche of records requests, Surfside posts documents to an online portal, including a recent engineering report outlining major structural damage.

JUNE 26

■ **2:23 a.m.** The records reveal the damage was caused by a “major error” in the building design, and the team breaks the news hours ahead of other publications.



JUNE 27

■ **5:00 a.m.** A 3D animation by **Sohail Al-Jamea**, edited by **Eduardo Alvarez**, shows the probable collapse sequence. It is the first specific theory published by a major news outlet. To date, engineers agree it remains the most plausible scenario.

■ **9:20 p.m.** A town building official reviewed a damning report and still told residents their condo was safe, despite having evidence to the contrary. Again, the team breaks the news.

JUNE 28

■ **4:28 p.m.** Photos taken in the garage 36 hours before the collapse and exclusively obtained by the Herald reveal extensive corrosion in the structure.



BLASKEY



LEIBOWITZ



ALBRIGHT



AL-JAMEA



ALVAREZ



PEDRO PORTAL | MIAMI HERALD

FROM THE EDITOR

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JUNE 26

The early morning chat message on that fateful Thursday from my managing editor said we had a huge story developing with a building collapse in Surfside. It's a condo, he wrote, with people inside.

The first Miami Herald reporter on the scene was Joey Flechas, our local government reporter, who covers the city of Miami. The seaside condominium Champlain Towers South is about 10 minutes away from Joey's apartment. He said the rubble and rescue operation could be seen from a stretch of beach that he loves to visit on the weekends.

Joey said there was little information available when he arrived, but the seriousness was clear. He'd never seen so many police and fire rescue vehicles in one place. Firefighters already looked haggard, he said, some of them saying they didn't expect many survivors. It was dark, and the mood was grim.

Joey witnessed a man get the call from his wife, a caretaker inside the part of the tower that still stood, saying she was being rescued. The relief on his face and the tears in his eyes represented a small moment of reprieve. Joey would later share Santo Mejil's story with our readers. Joey



RICHARDSON

told Mejil's story and the gut-wrenching chronicles of other families who walked out of their front door to find the rest of their building missing. In less than 24 hours our headline on miamiherald.com went from 'Collapse' to 'Heartbreak.'

Our community was hurting like no other. Those families of the victims are enduring the unimaginable.

South Florida has been hit by tragedy — what could end up being one of the deadliest building collapses in American history.

In times of crisis, we come together. Moments like this show the power of community. While we may not always agree or even get along with our neighbors, communities will come together to provide support and encouragement in our darkest moments.

It's human instinct. This is a time when we all need to channel positive energy in the right direction to help those in need.

The Miami Herald and el Nuevo Herald are part of this community. We are still working this story to bring the latest news through words, pictures and video. And we will continue digging as questions loom about how something like this could have happened. We are committed to finding the answers.

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