

27 Workers Make Improbable Escape from Collapsed L.A. Tunnel

They climbed over a mound of loose soil and emerged at the tunnel's only entrance five miles away, officials said.



Listen to this article · 2:51 min [Learn more](#)

By Mimi Dwyer and John Yoon

Mimi Dwyer reported from Los Angeles.

July 10, 2025

Twenty-seven workers made an improbable escape from a collapsed tunnel in Los Angeles on Wednesday night by climbing over a large mound of loose soil and emerging at the only entrance five miles away without major injury, officials said.

Four other tunnel workers went inside the industrial tunnel after the collapse to help in the rescue efforts. All 31 workers emerged safely and without significant injuries, said Michael Chee, the spokesman for the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts.

The Los Angeles Fire Department said that no one was missing after it had dispatched more than 100 rescue workers to the site in the city's Wilmington neighborhood, about 20 miles south of downtown Los Angeles.

“Tonight, we were lucky,” interim Fire Department Chief Ronnie Villanueva said at a news conference.

The collapse left a 12- to 15-foot pile of loose soil inside a horizontal excavation site in the tunnel, which was seven miles long and had diameter of 18 feet, the Fire Department said in a statement. The tunnel was part of a construction project.

The tunnel workers who had been trapped by the debris scrambled over it and met their co-workers who had gone inside to help. The workers were then shuttled in batches on a tunnel vehicle to the entrance, fire officials said.

Television footage from local news broadcasters showed the workers being raised to the ground from the tunnel’s circular entrance inside a metal cage that was hoisted by a crane.



First responders rescued 31 workers on Wednesday evening after a tunnel collapsed in Los Angeles. KABC/ABC7 Los Angeles, via Associated Press

The authorities did not immediately say what had caused the collapse. Interim Chief Villanueva said that the workers were being treated for minor injuries.

The tunnel was part of a \$630 million wastewater management project commissioned by the Sanitation Districts. FlatironDragados, the main contractor of the tunnel, said on its website that the project was expected to be completed in 2027.

Construction workers were building a new tunnel to transport treated wastewater to the ocean, replacing two tunnels that had been in operation since the 1930s, Mr. Chee said.

Robert Ferrante, the chief engineer and general manager of the Sanitation Districts, said that construction would be paused indefinitely while the cause of the collapse was being determined. He said that the collapse had occurred in a section where the ground exerted high pressure on the tunnel while workers were operating a boring machine elsewhere.

Mayor Karen Bass told reporters outside the facility that she had rushed to the site fearing tragedy.

“We’re all blessed tonight in Los Angeles,” she said.

John Yoon is a Times reporter based in Seoul who covers breaking and trending news.