

Collapsed Florida condo demolished ahead of storm, search to resume

SURFSIDE, Fla., July 4 (Reuters) - The partially collapsed Miami-area condo where 24 people are confirmed dead was demolished on Sunday night, ahead of the possible arrival of Tropical Storm Elsa.

Search-and-rescue efforts for 121 people missing have been suspended. Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava told reporters earlier on Sunday that rescue efforts would resume after the demolition, noting it was 11 days since the collapse.

Video footage showed the 12-story building collapsing downward and throwing up plumes of smoke.

As of Sunday afternoon, Tropical Storm Elsa was off the coast of Cuba with winds of 60 miles per hour (95 kph). After moving across Cuba later on Sunday and Monday, the storm was forecast to approach western Florida on Tuesday or Wednesday.

In the wreckage of the Champlain Towers South complex in Surfside, workers drilled into columns where small explosive charges were placed to bring the remains of the building down in a small area, officials said.



View of the partially collapsed Champlain Towers South residential building as it is demolished, in Surferside, Florida, U.S., July 4, 2021. REUTERS/Marco Bello



Debris is seen after the partially collapsed Champlain Towers South residential building is demolished, in Surfside, Florida, U.S., July 4, 2021. REUTERS/Marco Bello



People gather to watch the partially collapsed Champlain Towers South residential building being demolished ahead of the possible arrival of Tropical Storm Elsa in Surfside, near Miami Beach, Florida, U.S. July 4, 2021. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton



Stephanie Rioja reacts with twins Leonardo and Melannie as the partially collapsed Champlain Towers South residential building is demolished ahead of the possible arrival of Tropical Storm Elsa in Surfside, near Miami Beach, Florida, U.S. July 4, 2021. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton



Smoke is seen after partially collapsed Champlain Towers South residential building is demolished, in Surfside, Florida, U.S., July 4, 2021. REUTERS/Marco Bello



View of the partially collapsed Champlain Towers South residential building as it is demolished, in Surferside, Florida, U.S., July 4, 2021. REUTERS/Marco Bello



People react as the partially collapsed Champlain Towers South residential building is demolished ahead of the possible arrival of Tropical Storm Elsa in Surfside, near Miami Beach, Florida, U.S. July 4, 2021. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton

Residents in nearby buildings did not need to evacuate but were instructed to stay indoors and turn off air conditioning due to dust.

Instead of the usual fireworks and flag-waving parties, beachside communities in the area planned more subdued events for the Fourth of July. Miami Beach canceled its Independence Day celebrations.

Investigators have not determined what caused the 40-year-old complex to collapse on June 24. A 2018 engineering report found structural deficiencies that are now the focus of inquiries that include a grand jury examination.

All residents of another building, Crestview Towers in North Miami Beach, were told on Friday to leave immediately after engineers found serious concrete and electrical problems, officials said.

The move was considered urgent because of the approach of Elsa, North Miami Beach City Manager Arthur Sorey said, adding that the building's owners had not yet begun a mandatory safety recertification process required 40 years after it was built.

"It's definitely not an easy decision," Sorey said. "It's just the right thing to do during these times. It's uncertain what's going to happen with the storm."

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