


A pileup on the Pennsylvania Turnpike kills 5 people and injures about 60 others

 edition.cnn.com/2020/01/05/us/pennsylvania-turnpike-fatal-crash/index.html

A pileup involving three tractor-trailers, a tour bus and a passenger car killed five people and injured at least 60 others in western Pennsylvania on Sunday morning, authorities said.

The crash happened around 3:34 a.m. on the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Mount Pleasant Township southeast of Pittsburgh, the Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety said.

The tour bus was traveling from New Jersey to Cincinnati and most of its passengers spoke Japanese or Spanish, Pennsylvania State Police spokesman Stephen Limani said at a news conference.

Forbes Hospital President Dr. Mark Rubino, speaking at an afternoon news conference, said the bus passengers arrived at that hospital emotional and disoriented.

"When the bus turned over, a lot of them had all their clothing and their personal belongings contaminated by diesel," he said. "They all came in scared. It was dark and cold."

Read More

Images of the crash site show the tour bus lying on its side with several damaged tractor-trailers, including a FedEx truck, splayed around it with packages spilling onto the ground.

The bus was traveling on a downhill grade when it failed to negotiate a corner, went up an embankment and rolled over, Limani said.

The overturned bus was struck by two tractor-trailers, which in turn were hit by a third tractor-trailer, Limani said. A passenger vehicle was then involved in the crash, he said. That section of the turnpike was closed to traffic in both directions for about 12 hours. Around 4 p.m., the eastbound lanes were reopened, CNN affiliate WPXI reported.

The National Transportation Safety Board will investigate the crash.

Around 60 people were taken to hospitals

The five people killed were found dead at the scene, county coroner Ken Bacha said. Authorities haven't said what vehicles they were riding in.

About 60 patients were taken to three area hospitals, Pennsylvania Turnpike spokesman Carl DeFebo said.

Excelsa Frick Hospital received 25 patients ranging from ages 7 to 52, spokeswoman Robin Jennings said. She said nine of the patients are children.

UPMC Somerset received 18 patients -- 12 adults and six children, hospital spokeswoman Sarah Deist told CNN. All 18 were treated and released, she said.

Eleven patients aged 15 to 67 were taken to Forbes Hospital in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, hospital spokeswoman Stephanie Waite said. Two patients were in critical

condition and nine were in fair condition, Waite said.

The crash occurred in Mount Pleasant Township southeast of Pittsburgh.

Translators were called

Rubino said the tour bus passengers who came to Forbes Hospital were "a mixture of people" speaking Spanish and Japanese.

"There were students. There were adolescents, which really concerned us because there were deaths at the scene. We had some family members. ... They were very interested in supporting each other," he said.

Forbes Hospital brought in social workers and psychologists as well as translators to help the passengers, he said. The passengers were given clean clothes, Rubino said, thanks to a grant the hospital used to purchase clothing for such a situation.

"That kindness and compassion meant so much to them in this state of stress they were in," he said.

The NTSB will investigate

The National Transportation Safety Board is sending a team of more than a dozen people to the crash site to investigate, the agency announced in a tweet.

Some of the people at the scene described a change in weather prior to the crash, including precipitation, Limani said.

"We are so early in our investigation it's hard to pinpoint anything specific," Limani said.

Craig Shuey, chief operating officer of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, said that section of the turnpike gets a lot of snow, so crews had been dropping salt and cinder on the roadway since Saturday night.

Pennsylvania Turnpike spokeswoman Renee Colborn said the speed limit is 70 mph in the crash area. The road conditions seemed to be "fine" and the roads are treated 24/7, she said.

FedEx spokeswoman Allie Addoms provided this statement: "First and foremost we extend our deepest condolences to the families of the individuals involved in this accident. There is no higher priority for FedEx Ground than safety, and we are cooperating fully with investigating authorities at this time."

A UPS spokesperson said one of their vehicles was involved in the crash and issued the following statement: "UPS is cooperating with authorities in the investigation and we express our deepest sympathies to the victims and their families and friends."

Major pileups have occurred on the Pennsylvania Turnpike in the past. In February 2014, 100 vehicles were involved in a massive wreck north of Philadelphia that injured at least 30 people.