

Building Collapses in Philadelphia, Leaves Occupants Trapped

A building collapsed in downtown Philadelphia on Wednesday, and rescue workers pulled 12 people from the rubble and were trying to reach two others trapped beneath it, fire officials said.

A four-story building under demolition collapsed onto a neighboring two-story Salvation Army Thrift Store at 2140 Market Street at 10:45 a.m., trapping people under mountains of crushed concrete and splintered wood, said Philadelphia Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers.

In addition to those rescued, “we located two others and are in the process of extricating both of those people,” Ayers said.

Those pulled from the rubble suffered minor injuries and were taken to area hospitals where they were in stable condition, he said.

One witness, Dan Gillis, 31, of Cinnaminson, New Jersey, a construction worker on a job across the street, told Reuters he saw a crane remove a supporting beam from the front of the building, and suddenly the wall next to the thrift store started swaying.

Another witness, Jeffrey Fehnel, 48, of Philadelphia, said about the same time a backhoe hit the rear side of the building.

“The building came down. It was like a big blast,” Fehnel told Reuters.

Authorities said the cause of the collapse was still under

investigation.

Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter said rescue workers were searching for more survivors. The incident occurred at 22nd and Market streets in the heart of Philadelphia's Center City.

A witness told Reuters that the building collapse shook the ground and knocked a man off his feet on the sidewalk outside the thrift store.

"It was ground-shaking. The shaking of the ground made the man fall down," said Jordan McLaughlin, 18, of Philadelphia.

Police urged the public to stay away from the area while rescuers dug through the rubble.

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