Search resumes aboard capsized rig

MORGAN CITY, La. (AP) - Divers pulled a seventh body from the dark, flooded interior of a capsized oil rig today to a murky Louisiana bayou and continued looking for four other men feared drowned.

The body was found at midmorning, about 15 hours after the search resumed following an overnight break. There was no immediate identification.

Keith Spangler, a Coast Guard spokesman in New Orleans, said the search was expanded to include waters surrounding the overturned rig, the Tonkawa.

"The search was expanded based upon what the divers accomplished yesterday and where the owners believe the people may have been at the time of the incident, based on what their job description was on the barge," said Spangler. "Three people are believed to still be on the barge and two people may be in the water."

The flatbottomed rig, which can be floated from one location to another, overturned shortly before midnight Monday with 22 men aboard as it was being towed through Bayou Cheene. By noon Tuesday, it was rescued.

Nine were plucked from the water after escaping the toppled rig. Two were pulled through a hole cut in the hull, where they had been trapped for five hours.

Divers had found the two by tracing tapping noises.

"You can't see in there. It's all by feel," said Jimmy Greco, an Eunice Ambulance Service employee.

Authorities said they didn't know what caused the accident.

"We have no logical explanation at this point in time for what happened," said Don Patterson, president of Temple Drilling Co. of Houston, Texas.

Temple Drilling operated the rig.

Aubrey Authement, chief of detectives for Terrebonne Parish, identified five of the dead as Kent Romero of New Iberia; James Welch Jr. of Morgan City; Burleigh Mire of Church Point; Danny M. Droddy of Eunice; and Randal Roberts of Needham, Ala. Their ages were not immediately known.

Authement said there were problems with identities because many of the men were sleeping or in the shower at the time of the accident and had no identification on them.

One survivor, who would not permit his name to be used, said he woke about 11:15 p.m. Monday and water was flooding the bunkroom. He said many of the crew members were unable to swim, and he pulled two of them to safety before the rig flipped.

Six survivors were identified as Kerry Toups, about 25, of Delembre; Charles Taylor, 23, of Hazelhurst, Miss.; Willie Johnson, 32, of Breaux Bridge; Mike Lender, 27, Gilbertson, Ala.; Joseph Tynes, 24, Monticello, Miss., and Tad...
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