

TOP STORIES

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Two dead in pit collapse

Officials: 1 body recovered, 1 still missing in Upper Brookville site

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A contractor died and a second worker was presumed dead underneath a mound of wet sand and dirt late Tuesday night after one of the walls of a 30-foot-deep hole collapsed as they installed a septic tank in Upper Brookville, Nassau police said.

Rescue teams called to the scene Tuesday afternoon made a desperate attempt “using shovels and their bare hands” to pull the workers from the pile, said Nassau police Det. Lt. Richard LeBrun.

“They put their lives at risk. They went down into this hole,” LeBrun said of rescuers.

Emergency crews eventually pulled a 45-year-old man from the collapsed pit but he was pronounced dead at the



HOWARD SCHNAPP

Emergency personnel from several agencies respond to the construction site collapse in Upper Brookville Tuesday night.

scene, LeBrun said. Efforts to pull out the second victim, a 57-year-old man, continued Tuesday night but investigators believe he died, LeBrun said near the site.

“What was a rescue effort,” he

said, “is now a recovery effort.”

The identities of the men were not immediately released.

The wall of the pit collapsed about 4:45 p.m. at a residence on Wolver Hollow Road near Pine

Valley Road, officials said.

The workers were 30 feet below ground when a “wall of sand and dirt collapsed” and “buried them in approximately five to seven feet of dirt,” LeBrun said.

Nassau police officers with the department’s Emergency Service Unit then “began to dig,” LeBrun said. “They recovered one body of a male, age 45. At the time of recovery, other areas of the wall began to collapse, which made it unsafe to be there. They had to now retreat, and they started to secure other areas of the wall.”

He said the septic tank the men were installing contained several “large, round concrete cylinders weighing approximately 2,000 pounds.”

Upper Brookville police

were first on scene and joined Nassau police in the initial rescue effort, LeBrun said.

Firefighters from Bethpage, East Norwich, Elmont, Freeport, Lakeville, Manhasset, Massapequa, North Bellmore and Port Washington also assisted.

Shortly after 7:20 p.m., four women who LeBrun said were relatives of the victims walked to the private residence leading up to the site of the collapse. Three of the women walked with their arms linked. One was crying and police officers escorted her to the front of a long driveway, behind police tape, leading to the pit.

The wife of one of the victims collapsed minutes later and was put on a stretcher and treated by medical personnel at the scene, LeBrun said.