

10 people, including children, seriously injured while attempting to cross San Diego border wall, in “mass casualty” event

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At least ten people were seriously injured on Saturday, March 2, after falling from the 30-foot-high US-Mexico border wall in San Diego, California. Due to the severity and volume of injuries, San Diego Fire-Rescue officials determined the incident was a “mass casualty” event.

At least six ambulances were dispatched to the scene, along with several fire trucks. Emergency officials said there were multiple types of injuries, including fractures, and that some of those injured were children. Local officials estimate 130 people were attempting to scale the border wall, which separates San Diego from Tijuana, Mexico.

On Monday, US Customs and Border Protection released a statement confirming that “individuals complained of various injuries sustained during their illegal entry into the United States.”

As of this writing it does not appear any of the injured migrants have died, although it is unclear how severe or life-altering their injuries may be.

In an interview with the local San Diego CBS affiliate, Dr. Alexander Tenorio, a resident neurosurgeon at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), said that after falling from the border wall, “A lot of them can’t walk afterwards, even after we treat them. Once their spinal cord is damaged, for a lot of them, they have very minimal recovery or no recovery at all. So that leaves them not being able to walk.”

Dr. Tenorio told CBS that injuries suffered from scaling the border wall have become more serious since

sections of the wall were raised to 30 feet in 2019 under President Donald Trump.

An August 2023 report from UCSD Health’s trauma center, titled “Falling from new heights: Traumatic fracture burden and resource utilization after border wall height increase” found that injuries from scaling the border wall have increased by “5-fold” since roughly 400 feet of the border wall was increased in height to 30 feet in 2019.

Between 2016-2019, when the wall topped out at 22 feet, the study documented 67 “trauma-related incidents from falls.” Between 2019 and 2021, this figure increased to 375.

The same study found that at least 28 people died trying to get over or around the border wall in 2023. The year before there were 22 deaths. In 2019, there were none.

In 2023 UCSD Health recorded 455 “trauma-related incidents from falls.” Dr. Tenorio said, however, that the real number is actually higher. He also clarified that this figure only takes into account severe injuries, such as broken limbs, orbital bones, or spinal fractures. The figure also does not include injuries suffered by children.

In an interview with the *Guardian*, Dr. Tenorio said many of the patients he sees suffering from these injuries “come with fractures all over their body, unfortunately, and that’s what you would expect if someone falls 30 feet. It’s like a three-story building.”

In 2023, for the first time, Tenorio said more women than men were admitted to the hospital with injuries sustained from scaling the wall.

Tenorio told CBS8 that prior to the raising of the wall to 30 feet, which encompasses a nearly four-year stretch of time, the hospital saw 12 spinal fractures suffered by immigrants. After the raising of the wall, these types of injuries increased to over 100 in less than two years.

In addition to spinal and other types of fractures, since the height of the wall has been raised Tenorio has recorded an increase in injuries to the blood vessels in the brain, which leaves patients unable to speak or walk. “We didn’t see any of those before the border wall was raised to 30 feet,” he told CBS.

The drastic increase in the number of serious injuries from falls has forced the hospital to open a separate unit dedicated to treating these injuries, which are not only life-threatening or life-altering, for the victims, but can also extract a heavy toll from doctors, nurses, and first responders treating them.

Last week, NBC News reported on the immense psychological toll first responders in Eagle Pass, Texas, are suffering, after witnessing years of mass death and egregious injuries suffered by immigrants and their children while trying to cross the Rio Grande into the border town.

Fascist Gov. Greg Abbott’s introduction of saw-blade death buoys and concertina wire has not deterred crossings, but it has increased the number of deaths and injuries.

Eagle Pass Fire Chief Manuel Mello told NBC his EMTs and firefighters are seeing “decomposing bodies, they see children that have drowned. Babies two months old, with their eyes half-open, their mouths full of mud. I know that when I signed up, they told me that I would see all of that, but not in the number that these guys are seeing now.”

Marcos Kypuros, an Eagle Pass firefighter and EMT for two decades, told NBC that there are times “where we recover four or five, six, up to seven bodies a day—it

was just rough.”

“I try and leave all this at work, not take it home with me, but it’s so hard,” he told the network. “Sometimes it’s hard to cope.” After Abbott installed concertina wire, Kypuros said firefighters have been treating more “lacerations” and “open wounds,” which have overwhelmed local hospitals.

Kypuros and Harish Garcia, another firefighter EMT in Eagle Pass, told the network they had “lost count” of the number of bodies they have recovered, either from the Rio Grande, or decomposing in the desert brush.

Deaths and serious injuries are a daily occurrence along the US-Mexico border. Last year, the United Nations reported that the US-Mexico border was the deadliest land crossing in the world, with 683 confirmed deaths. In just the El Paso sector, located in Texas, US Customs and Border Protection reported 148 deaths in fiscal year 2023, more than double the 71 deaths recorded in 2022.

After pledging in 2020 to enact more humane border policies compared to his far-right predecessor, President Joe Biden has not only continued virtually all of Trump’s border policies, including building the deadly border wall, but he has also called on Trump to “join me” in supporting draconian anti-immigrant legislation, in order to secure military funding for war in Ukraine and genocide in Gaza.

The right-wing border legislation has been endorsed by the *Wall Street Journal*, the US Chamber of Commerce and the Border Patrol union because it would drastically increase the size of the border police apparatus, virtually eliminate the right to claim asylum in the US and provide the president new executive powers to “shut down” ports of entry across the United States.



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