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# WATERSLIDE COLLAPSES AT *WATERWORLD USA* IN CALIFORNIA

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## One dead, 30 hurt in water slide collapse

### Students ignored warning

June 3, 1997

Web posted at: 2:25 p.m. EDT (1825 GMT)

CONCORD, California (CNN) -- A popular northern California amusement park remained closed Tuesday, the day after a water slide collapsed, killing a teen-age girl and critically injuring six of her high school classmates.



The twisted wreckage of the water-slide.

At least 30 people were injured in Monday afternoon's accident at Waterworld USA, about 30 miles northeast of San Francisco.

The students -- seniors on a pre-graduation outing -- ignored a lifeguard's warning and tried to ride down the 75-foot-tall slide together, according to Waterworld general manager Steve Mayer.

"Our guard couldn't control it," he said of the large gathering of teen-agers going down the water slide.

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**'OUR GUARD COULDN'T  
CONTROL IT'**

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The accident occurred soon after the park announced that Napa High School students visiting Waterworld -- about 120 in all, according to the school -- should return to their buses for the trip home.

At that point, some of them rushed to the top of the slide, according to Rick McCurley, vice president of Premier Parks Inc., which owns Waterworld.

Survivors said they were trying to break a school record for total number on the slide when it gave way.

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### WATER TURNED RED WITH BLOOD

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Witnesses said people on the winding slide, called the Banzai Pipeline, crashed to the ground when it collapsed. The pool of water below turned red with blood.



(CNN)

The injured teens were screaming and crying for help, witnesses said. "It was a very chaotic scene at first," one police officer at the park said. "It was pandemonium," another officer said.

One girl, a 17-year-old Napa student who was not identified, died 45 minutes later from a crushed chest. [Helicopters](#) and ambulances transported the injured to nine hospitals.

In a statement issued late on Monday, Premier Parks defended its safety record. "Safety is our number one priority. Based upon what we know at this point, we believe this slide was safe," the company said.

Concord police Lt. Jim Jennings said city officials would conduct an investigation at the site.

He said police were not aware before this incident of any safety problems at the park.

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# Expert says water slide carried too much weight

June 5, 1997

Web posted at: 11:28 p.m. EDT (0328 GMT)

From Correspondent Rusty Dornin

CONCORD, California (CNN) -- A water slide twisted apart with dozens of teen-agers aboard Monday because there was too much weight in one place, according to a safety expert.

One teen-ager was killed and 32 injured in the accident, in which the slide tore apart some 37 feet above the ground.



(CNN)

Dr. John Hunsucker, an industrial engineering professor from the University of Houston, said his investigation has not yet revealed any problems with the ride structure.

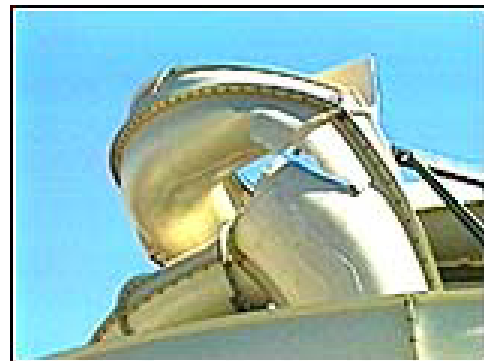
"That slide is a good slide," he said.

Hunsucker was hired by Premier Parks, owner of Waterworld USA. Park officials have maintained the collapse was caused when about 30 Napa High School students rushed a lifeguard in an attempt to go down the slide together.

Posted warning signs do not tell riders to go one at a time. Park officials claim lifeguards tried to stop the crowd of young people.

But some parents are blaming the park for the tragedy at the popular East Bay water park.

"It makes me angry -- do we have to have a catastrophe before they pass some kind of law governing water slides?" asked John Thibaut, whose son Mark was injured. "There is definitely an issue of safety, and it's not just this park."



(CNN)

Some students, who were at the park for their senior class trip, have acknowledged they were trying to get as many people as possible on the ride. Some have claimed they weren't warned to stop, but others admit the lifeguard on duty was blowing a whistle in warning.

Hunsucker, who is also president of the National Aquatic Safety Co., said he believes the slide can hold at least 10 people at one time, but he is not sure how many more than that it could hold