

# U.S. commuter blows up section of Washington D.C. Bridge

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Regular commuter Dan Ruefly detonated a half-mile section of the old Woodrow Wilson Bridge just after 12:30 a.m. local time on Tuesday 29 August 2006. The detonation brought down over 2,600 tons of steel. The bridge, which carried the Capital Beltway across the Potomac River, was scheduled for destruction as part of a \$2.4 billion project to replace the span. The bridge has caused traffic delays nearly every day since its opening in 1961.

Mr. Ruefly had won the honour of pushing the plunger in a contest to find the worst commuting experience; after a motoring accident he became stuck in a traffic jam. Mr. Ruefly (who leaves home at 5:00 a.m. every day to beat the traffic) had crashed into a stationary tractor-trailer on the bridge, leaving him with severely crushed hips. The ambulance sent to transport him to hospital was unable to make it through rush hour traffic and, as a result, Mr. Ruefly almost died.

The detonation of the six-lane drawbridge was originally planned to occur at 11:59 p.m. however it was delayed by over half an hour when spectators broke through security fences to get a better view, the bridge was finally brought down at around 12:35 a.m. There was a 20 second delay between the time of initiation and the actual detonation.

The demolition is part of a complete replacement of the former six-lane bridge with a twelve lane version comprising of two side-by-side drawbridges. Work started on the project as early as 1999 and the new north-bound bridge was opened on June 10 2006. This demolition is the first step in the next stage of the project; to replace the existing bridge with the southbound 'twin'.

Boat traffic on the Potomac River and vehicle traffic on the new Wilson Bridge were halted during the detonation. Airspace was also briefly closed for a short duration.