

By TERI FIGUEROA & KRISTINA DAVIS  
AUG. 3, 2019

ENCINITAS, Calif. —

Three people who were fatally crushed when a bluff collapsed at an Encinitas beach Friday were part of the same family: a 35-year-old woman, her 65-year-old mother and an aunt.

Anne Clave and her mother, Julie Davis, both died at Scripps Memorial Hospital in Encinitas after the collapse, according to the San Diego County medical examiner's office. Clave's aunt was identified in a family email obtained by KNSD-TV Channel 7 as Elizabeth Cox, who died at the scene.

The victims were part of a large family gathering at Grandview Beach that day celebrating Cox's victory over breast cancer, the TV station reported, citing the email.

The Davis family has called Encinitas home for 40 years, according to a 2016 profile in 92024 Magazine. Davis was a mother of four, with nine grandchildren, according to the article.

Davis' husband, Pat, runs a pediatric dentist practice in Encinitas with one of his sons.

On Saturday morning, lifeguards reopened the beach on both sides of the collapse site, which remained closed. At a news conference, Encinitas lifeguard Capt. Larry Giles said his agency will post a lifeguard in the area and keep an eye on the site.

The captain said the lifeguard tower near the scene was relocated because officials have determined that "the area is still active." He said a geologist assessing the scene was "concerned about the areas to the side of the current failure failing."

The homes on top of the cliff were in no immediate danger, Giles said.

The collapse occurred shortly before 3 p.m. Friday at a popular surf spot with a narrow beach between the water and the sandstone cliffs. Just north of the stairs leading to the sand, a roughly 30-foot-wide chunk of the cliff slipped away.

The heavy sandstone crashed down onto the victims near the base of the cliff. A nearby lifeguard felt and heard the thud as the dense dirt landed.

“It just happened to take place outside his peripheral” vision, Giles said, noting that the lifeguard had had his eyes trained on the water.

Parts of the San Diego coast have been vulnerable to cliff erosion and collapse in the past.

In 1995, two men died when they were buried under tons of rock, and another was injured as he fled, after a cliff at Torrey Pines State Beach collapsed. The two victims were sitting or walking on the beach when the cliff above them caved in. The men were covered by tons of rock and dirt.

The last fatal bluff collapse in San Diego County occurred on Aug. 20, 2008, when 57-year-old Nevada tourist Robert Mellone was crushed by a shower of sand and boulders from a section of bluff above Torrey Pines State Beach.

It’s not yet clear when the Encinitas collapse site will reopen.

“We are going to continue on assessing that with the experts,” Giles told reporters, “and the team will continue to reevaluate and determine how long we are going to keep that closed.”

Asked by a reporter whether last month’s 7.1 earthquake in Ridgecrest — roughly 200 miles away in Kern County, but felt in San Diego County — could have been a factor in shaking the crumbling cliffs even looser, Giles said there had been no mention of that by the geologists assessing the bluff.

“It’s just an erosion incident that took place at this location at the wrong time,” he said.

*Figueroa and Davis write for the San Diego Union-Tribune.*