

How to use scientific inquiry

Make observations:

After the I-35W Bridge collapsed, local sheriff's department handled the initial recovery of the collapsed bridge structure. Finding, freeing, and identifying victims was a high priority. However, investigators eventually recovered the entire structure. Investigators labeled each part with the location where it was found.

Examining the reassembled structure, investigators found physical evidence they needed to determine where the breaks in each section occurred.

A motion activated security camera recorded the bridge collapse, investigators used this video to help pinpoint where the collapse began.

Ask Questions:

One or more factors could have caused the bridge to fail. Was the original bridge design faulty? Were bridge maintenance and repair poor or lacking? Was there too much weight on the bridge at the time of the collapse? Each of these questions was studied to determine why the bridge collapsed. Did one or a combination of these factors cause the bridge to fail?