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# Salvage company to begin lifting toppled rail bridge

Giant winches on two shores will be used to pull the 800-ton structure upright

By **RICHARD PEARSALL**  
Courier-Post Staff

## RIVERSIDE

A salvage company is expected to start work today to right the 800-ton section of the Rancocas rail bridge that toppled during construction work in April, sending five workers diving for safety.

Work on lifting the steel span is scheduled to start at 1 p.m., using giant winches installed on both the Riverside and Delanco banks.

The bridge, which rests on a 500-ton barge, was being floated into place on April 6 when it suddenly listed and keeled over, forcing five workers to jump onto the barge, or into the chilly creek.

The bridge is part of the 34-mile light-rail line from Camden to Trenton, which



Sources: Southern New Jersey Rail Group, LLC and Rigging International

JEF DAUBER/Courier-Post

is scheduled to open by Jan. 1, 2003.

Officials of NJ Transit and South Jersey Rail Group say the accident will not cost taxpayers any additional funds because it is the responsibility of the contractors, and it is not expected to delay the opening of the light-rail line.

Righting the bridge will entail pulling a cable attached to the top of the bridge from the Delanco bank, while restraining it with a counterbalancing cable and winch from Riverside.

A device called a "slider" will pull the bottom of the bridge toward Riverside, creating a rotating motion and preventing the

bridge as a whole from being pulled toward Delanco.

The process could take 12 hours or longer, Charles Ingollia, a spokesman for NJ Transit, said.

NJ Transit has a \$604 million contract with South Jersey Rail Group, a consortium headed by the Bechtel Corp., to design, build, operate and maintain the South Jersey light rail line.

The bridge was being built to replace a swing bridge that was long part of the freight line that NJ Transit is upgrading to handle passenger as well as freight service.

The South Jersey Rail Group hired Rigging International, a California com-

pany, to handle the challenging job of righting the span.

Once righted, it will be inspected; then, if all goes well, floated into place for installment across Rancocas Creek.

The 210-foot span, which sits more than 10 feet above the barge deck on temporary supports called "falsework," will be floated into position at high tide, then allowed to settle on piers on either side of the creek as the tide recedes.

Rancocas Creek will be closed to boat traffic for about seven days.

The marine unit of the N.J. State Police will patrol the area and enforce the no-boating zone.

# Railroad bridge righted



CHRIS LaCHALL/Courier-Post

Workers slowly straighten the Rancocas Creek railroad bridge Friday night. The bridge fell over on April 5.

## Workers cautiously lift toppled span over Rancocas Creek

By **RICHARD PEARSALL**

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### RIVERSIDE

Moving at less than a snail's pace — and deliberately so — riggers lifted the fallen Rancocas Creek railroad bridge back into an upright position Friday.

The process began before noon under bright blue skies and ended around 11 p.m. under floodlights that starkly illuminated the bright blue bridge against the night

sky.

An American flag, a good luck symbol for construction workers, flew proudly atop the bridge along with a blue banner of Camden's Ironworkers Local 399.

By 1 p.m., a crowd of more than 50 spectators had gathered on the Delanco side of the creek to observe the salvage feat.

The operation was timed to coincide with the rising tide, spanning about six hours from the afternoon into the evening.



JEF DAUBER/Courier-Post

It was not until after 5 p.m. that six giant winches, three on each side of the creek, roared into action, pulled their cables taut and began lifting the bridge.



MULTIMEDIA:  
See our Web site for video of workers preparing the bridge to be righted.



At first, the movement was imperceptible.

"We're moving it in increments of three or four degrees," said Walter Walker Kimball, project director of the South Jersey light-rail line for the South Jersey Rail Group, the consortium of contractors building the 34-mile line from Camden to Trenton. "We want to be

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