

to lead co-workers in their respective areas to the center of the floor, where they would use the emergency intercom phone to obtain specific information on how to proceed. Some civilians have told us that their evacuation on September 11 was greatly aided by changes and training implemented by the Port Authority in response to the 1993 bombing.¹¹

But during these drills, civilians were not directed into the stairwells, or provided with information about their configuration and about the existence of transfer hallways and smoke doors. Neither full nor partial evacuation drills were held. Moreover, participation in drills that were held varied greatly from tenant to tenant. In general, civilians were never told not to evacuate up. The standard fire drill announcement advised participants that in the event of an actual emergency, they would be directed to descend to at least three floors below the fire. Most civilians recall simply being taught to await the instructions that would be provided at the time of an emergency. Civilians were not informed that rooftop evacuations were not part of the evacuation plan, or that doors to the roof were kept locked. The Port Authority acknowledges that it had no protocol for rescuing people trapped above a fire in the towers.¹²

Six weeks before the September 11 attacks, control of the WTC was transferred by net lease to a private developer, Silverstein Properties. Select Port Authority employees were designated to assist with the transition. Others remained on-site but were no longer part of the official chain of command. However, on September 11, most Port Authority World Trade Department employees—including those not on the designated “transition team”—reported to their regular stations to provide assistance throughout the morning. Although Silverstein Properties was in charge of the WTC on September 11, the WTC fire safety plan remained essentially the same.¹³

Preparedness of First Responders

On 9/11, the principal first responders were from the Fire Department of New York, the New York Police Department, the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD), and the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM).

Port Authority Police Department. On September 11, 2001, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department consisted of 1,331 officers, many of whom were trained in fire suppression methods as well as in law enforcement. The PAPD was led by a superintendent. There was a separate PAPD command for each of the Port Authority’s nine facilities, including the World Trade Center.¹⁴

Most Port Authority police commands used ultra-high-frequency radios. Although all the radios were capable of using more than one channel, most PAPD officers used one local channel. The local channels were low-wattage and worked only in the immediate vicinity of that command. The PAPD also had an agencywide channel, but not all commands could access it.¹⁵