

The logistics of fire operations were directed by Fire Dispatch Operations Division, which had a center in each of the five boroughs. All 911 calls concerning fire emergencies were transferred to FDNY dispatch.²²

As of September 11, FDNY companies and chiefs responding to a fire used analog, point-to-point radios that had six normal operating channels. Typically, the companies would operate on the same tactical channel, which chiefs on the scene would monitor and use to communicate with the firefighters. Chiefs at a fire operation also would use a separate command channel. Because these point-to-point radios had weak signal strength, communications on them could be heard only by other FDNY personnel in the immediate vicinity. In addition, the FDNY had a dispatch frequency for each of the five boroughs; these were not point-to-point channels and could be monitored from around the city.²³

The FDNY's radios performed poorly during the 1993 WTC bombing for two reasons. First, the radios signals often did not succeed in penetrating the numerous steel and concrete floors that separated companies attempting to communicate; and second, so many different companies were attempting to use the same point-to-point channel that communications became unintelligible.²⁴

The Port Authority installed, at its own expense, a repeater system in 1994 to greatly enhance FDNY radio communications in the difficult high-rise environment of the Twin Towers. The Port Authority recommended leaving the repeater system on at all times. The FDNY requested, however, that the repeater be turned on only when it was actually needed because the channel could cause interference with other FDNY operations in Lower Manhattan. The repeater system was installed at the Port Authority police desk in 5 WTC, to be activated by members of the Port Authority police when the FDNY units responding to the WTC complex so requested. However, in the spring of 2000 the FDNY asked that an activation console for the repeater system be placed instead in the lobby fire safety desk of each of the towers, making FDNY personnel entirely responsible for its activation. The Port Authority complied.²⁵

Between 1998 and 2000, fewer people died from fires in New York City than in any three-year period since accurate measurements began in 1946. Firefighter deaths—a total of 22 during the 1990s—compared favorably with the most tranquil periods in the department's history.²⁶

Office of Emergency Management and Interagency Preparedness. In 1996, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani created the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, which had three basic functions. First, OEM's Watch Command was to monitor the city's key communications channels—including radio frequencies of FDNY dispatch and the NYPD—and other data. A second purpose of the OEM was to improve New York City's response to major incidents, including terrorist attacks, by planning and conducting exercises and drills that would involve multiple city agencies, particularly the NYPD and FDNY. Third, the OEM would play a crucial role in managing the city's overall response to an