

ians should stay low, remain where they are, and wait for emergency personnel to reach them. This advice was given to callers from the North Tower for locations both above and below the impact zone. Fire chiefs told us that the evacuation of tens of thousands of people from skyscrapers can create many new problems, especially for individuals who are disabled or in poor health. Many of the injuries after the 1993 bombing occurred during the evacuation.³⁷

Although the guidance to stay in place may seem understandable in cases of conventional high-rise fires, FDNY chiefs in the North Tower lobby determined at once that all building occupants should attempt to evacuate immediately. By 8:57, FDNY chiefs had instructed the PAPD and building personnel to evacuate the South Tower as well, because of the magnitude of the damage caused by the first plane's impact.³⁸

These critical decisions were not conveyed to 911 operators or to FDNY dispatchers. Departing from protocol, a number of operators told callers that they could break windows, and several operators advised callers to evacuate if they could.³⁹ Civilians who called the Port Authority police desk located at 5 WTC were advised to leave if they could.⁴⁰

Most civilians who were not obstructed from proceeding began evacuating without waiting for instructions over the intercom system. Some remained to wait for help, as advised by 911 operators. Others simply continued to work or delayed to collect personal items, but in many cases were urged to leave by others. Some Port Authority civilian employees remained on various upper floors to help civilians who were trapped and to assist in the evacuation.⁴¹

While evacuating, some civilians had trouble reaching the exits because of damage caused by the impact. Some were confused by deviations in the increasingly crowded stairwells, and impeded by doors that appeared to be locked but actually were jammed by debris or shifting that resulted from the impact of the plane. Despite these obstacles, the evacuation was relatively calm and orderly.⁴²

Within ten minutes of impact, smoke was beginning to rise to the upper floors in debilitating volumes and isolated fires were reported, although there were some pockets of refuge. Faced with insufferable heat, smoke, and fire, and with no prospect for relief, some jumped or fell from the building.⁴³

South Tower. Many civilians in the South Tower were initially unaware of what had happened in the other tower. Some believed an incident had occurred in their building; others were aware that a major explosion had occurred on the upper floors of the North Tower. Many people decided to leave, and some were advised to do so by fire wardens. In addition, Morgan Stanley, which occupied more than 20 floors of the South Tower, evacuated its employees by the decision of company security officials.⁴⁴

Consistent with protocol, at 8:49 the deputy fire safety director in the South Tower told his counterpart in the North Tower that he would wait to hear from "the boss from the Fire Department or somebody" before ordering an evacuation.⁴⁵ At about this time, an announcement over the public-address system in