

cers from some PAPD commands lacked interoperable radio frequencies. As a result, there was no comprehensive coordination of PAPD's overall response.⁷⁵

At 9:00, the PAPD commanding officer of the WTC ordered an evacuation of all civilians in the World Trade Center complex, because of the magnitude of the calamity in the North Tower. This order was given over WTC police radio channel W, which could not be heard by the deputy fire safety director in the South Tower.⁷⁶

Also at 9:00, the PAPD Superintendent and Chief of Department arrived separately and made their way to the North Tower.⁷⁷

OEM Initial Response

By 8:48, officials in OEM headquarters on the 23rd floor of 7 WTC—just to the north of the North Tower—began to activate the Emergency Operations Center by calling such agencies as the FDNY, NYPD, Department of Health, and the Greater Hospital Association and instructing them to send their designated representatives to the OEM. In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was called and asked to send at least five federal Urban Search and Rescue Teams (such teams are located throughout the United States). At approximately 8:50, a senior representative from the OEM arrived in the lobby of the North Tower and began to act as the OEM field responder to the incident. He soon was joined by several other OEM officials, including the OEM Director.⁷⁸

Summary

In the 17-minute period between 8:46 and 9:03 A.M. on September 11, New York City and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey had mobilized the largest rescue operation in the city's history. Well over a thousand first responders had been deployed, an evacuation had begun, and the critical decision that the fire could not be fought had been made.

Then the second plane hit.

From 9:03 until 9:59 A.M.

At 9:03:11, the hijacked United Airlines Flight 175 hit 2 WTC (the South Tower) from the south, crashing through the 77th to 85th floors. What had been the largest and most complicated rescue operation in city history instantly doubled in magnitude. The plane banked as it hit the building, leaving portions of the building undamaged on impact floors. As a consequence—and in contrast to the situation in the North Tower—one of the stairwells (A) initially remained passable from at least the 91st floor down, and likely from top to bottom.⁷⁹

Civilians, Fire Safety Personnel, and 911 Calls

South Tower. At the lower end of the impact, the 78th-floor sky lobby, hundreds had been waiting to evacuate when the plane hit. Many had attempted but failed to squeeze into packed express elevators. Upon impact, many were