

Comm group, tactical 1 simply was not designed to handle the number of units operating on it that morning.¹³¹

The primary Field Comm van had access to the NYPD's Special Operations channel (used by NYPD Aviation), but it was in the garage for repairs on September 11. The backup van lacked that capability.¹³²

The Chief of Department, along with civilian commissioners and senior EMS chiefs, organized ambulances on West Street to expedite the transport of injured civilians to hospitals.¹³³

To our knowledge, none of the chiefs present believed that a total collapse of either tower was possible. One senior chief did articulate his concern that upper floors could begin to collapse in a few hours, and that firefighters thus should not ascend above floors in the 60s. That opinion was not conveyed to chiefs in the North Tower lobby, and there is no evidence that it was conveyed to chiefs in the South Tower lobby either.¹³⁴

Although the Chief of Department had general authority over operations, tactical decisions remained the province of the lobby commanders. The highest-ranking officer in the North Tower was responsible for communicating with the Chief of Department. They had two brief conversations. In the first, the senior lobby chief gave the Chief of Department a status report and confirmed that this was a rescue, not firefighting, operation. In the second conversation, at about 9:45, the Chief of Department suggested that given how the North Tower appeared to him, the senior lobby chief might want to consider evacuating FDNY personnel.¹³⁵

At 9:46, the Chief of Department called an additional fifth alarm, and at 9:54 an additional 20 engine and 6 ladder companies were sent to the WTC. As a result, more than one-third of all FDNY companies now had been dispatched to the WTC. At about 9:57, an EMS paramedic approached the FDNY Chief of Department and advised that an engineer in front of 7 WTC had just remarked that the Twin Towers in fact were in imminent danger of a total collapse.¹³⁶

NYPD Response

Immediately after the second plane hit, the Chief of Department of the NYPD ordered a second Level 4 mobilization, bringing the total number of NYPD officers responding to close to 2,000.¹³⁷

The NYPD Chief of Department called for Operation Omega, which required the protection of sensitive locations around the city. NYPD headquarters were secured and all other government buildings were evacuated.¹³⁸

The ESU command post at Church and Vesey streets coordinated all NYPD ESU rescue teams. After the South Tower was hit, the ESU officer running this command post decided to send one ESU team (each with approximately six police officers) up each of the Twin Towers' stairwells. While he continued to monitor the citywide SOD channel, which NYPD helicopters were using, he also monitored the point-to-point tactical channel that the ESU teams climb in the towers would use.¹³⁹