

to evacuate injured or disoriented civilians. Numerous other NYPD officers were stationed throughout the concourse, assisting burned, injured, and disoriented civilians, as well as directing all civilians to exit to the north and east. NYPD officers were also in the South Tower lobby to assist in civilian evacuation. NYPD officers stationed on Vesey Street between West Street and Church Street urged civilians not to remain in the area and instead to keep walking north.¹⁴⁷

At 9:06, the NYPD Chief of Department instructed that no units were to land on the roof of either tower. At about 9:30, one of the helicopters present advised that a rooftop evacuation still would not be possible. One NYPD helicopter pilot believed one portion of the North Tower roof to be free enough of smoke that a hoist could be lowered in order to rescue people, but there was no one on the roof. This pilot's helicopter never attempted to hover directly over the tower. Another helicopter did attempt to do so, and its pilot stated that the severity of the heat from the jet fuel-laden fire in the North Tower would have made it impossible to hover low enough for a rescue, because the high temperature would have destabilized the helicopter.¹⁴⁸

At 9:51, an aviation unit warned units of large pieces of debris hanging from the building. Prior to 9:59, no NYPD helicopter pilot predicted that either tower would collapse.¹⁴⁹

Interaction of 911 Calls and NYPD Operations. At 9:37, a civilian on the 106th floor of the South Tower reported to a 911 operator that a lower floor—the “90-something floor”—was collapsing. This information was conveyed inaccurately by the 911 operator to an NYPD dispatcher. The dispatcher further confused the substance of the 911 call by telling NYPD officers at the WTC complex that “the 106th floor is crumbling” at 9:52, 15 minutes after the 911 call was placed. The NYPD dispatcher conveyed this message on the radio frequency used in precincts in the vicinity of the WTC and subsequently on the Special Operations Division channel, but not on City Wide channel 1.¹⁵⁰

PAPD Response

Initial responders from outside PAPD commands proceeded to the police desk in 5 WTC or to the fire safety desk in the North Tower lobby. Some officers were then assigned to assist in stairwell evacuations; others were assigned to expedite evacuation in the plaza, concourse, and PATH station. As information was received of civilians trapped above ground-level floors of the North Tower, other PAPD officers were instructed to climb to those floors for rescue efforts. Still others began climbing toward the impact zone.¹⁵¹

At 9:11, the PAPD Superintendent and an inspector began walking up stairwell B of the North Tower to assess damage near and in the impact zone. The PAPD Chief and several other PAPD officers began ascending a stairwell in