

more after the event. According to two eyewitnesses, however, one senior FDNY chief who knew that the South Tower had collapsed strongly expressed the opinion that the North Tower would not collapse, because unlike the South Tower, it had not been hit on a corner.¹⁷⁴

After the South Tower collapsed, some firefighters on the streets neighboring the North Tower remained where they were or came closer to the North Tower. Some of these firefighters did not know that the South Tower had collapsed, but many chose despite that knowledge to remain in an attempt to save additional lives. According to one such firefighter, a chief who was preparing to mount a search-and-rescue mission in the Marriott, "I would never think of myself as a leader of men if I had headed north on West Street after [the] South Tower collapsed." Just outside the North Tower on West Street one firefighter was directing others exiting the building, telling them when no jumpers were coming down and it was safe to run out. A senior chief had grabbed an NYPD bullhorn and was urging firefighters exiting onto West Street to continue running north, well away from the WTC. Three of the most senior and respected members of the FDNY were involved in attempting to rescue civilians and firefighters from the Marriott.¹⁷⁵

NYPD Response

A member of the NYPD Aviation Unit radioed that the South Tower had collapsed immediately after it happened, and further advised that all people in the WTC complex and nearby areas should be evacuated. At 10:04, NYPD aviation reported that the top 15 stories of the North Tower "were glowing red" and that they might collapse. At 10:08, a helicopter pilot warned that he did not believe the North Tower would last much longer.¹⁷⁶

Immediately after the South Tower collapsed, many NYPD radio frequencies became overwhelmed with transmissions relating to injured, trapped, or missing officers. As a result, NYPD radio communications became strained on most channels. Nevertheless, they remained effective enough for the two closest NYPD mobilization points to be moved further from the WTC at 10:06.¹⁷⁷

Just like most firefighters, the ESU rescue teams in the North Tower had no idea that the South Tower had collapsed. However, by 10:00 the ESU officer running the command post at Church and Vesey ordered the evacuation of all ESU units from the WTC complex. This officer, who had observed the South Tower collapse, reported it to ESU units in the North Tower in his evacuation instruction.¹⁷⁸

This instruction was clearly heard by the two ESU units already in the North Tower and the other ESU unit preparing to enter the tower. The ESU team on the 31st floor found the full collapse of the South Tower so unfathomable that they radioed back to the ESU officer at the command post and asked him to repeat his communication. He reiterated his urgent message.¹⁷⁹

The ESU team on the 31st floor conferred with the FDNY personnel there to ensure that they, too, knew that they had to evacuate, then proceeded down