

NYPD Command Post was established on Liberty Street.⁶ Following the collapse of WTC 2, the PAPD Police Desk that was located inside WTC 5 was abandoned.¹⁰

6.5.2 Rescue Operations

The initial response to the towers' collapses by emergency responders at the scene was to find lost members of their units and to conduct necessary rescue operations for personnel calling for help. Also, as the radio systems came back on line, emergency responders indicated that the radios became filled with Mayday distress messages, and surviving personnel began to respond to these calls for help.¹¹ These statements are supported by numerous emergency responder comments during first-person interviews, as well as the numerous Mayday calls heard on the radios following the buildings collapsing.¹¹ As a result of these calls, emergency responders initially were focused on rescuing trapped personnel and were not addressing any issues associated with the condition of WTC 7.

However, as the dust cloud continued to clear, it became apparent that WTC 7 had sustained damage and required immediate attention.¹² The PAPD reported that the collapse of WTC 1 had done significant damage to WTC 7.¹³ FDNY personnel at the scene reported that a large amount of debris from WTC 1 had crashed through the front center (south side) of WTC 7 from approximately the 10th floor down to ground level, and debris ripped off part of the southwest corner from approximately the 8th floor up to the 18th floor.¹² The collapse of WTC 1 also was ascribed as responsible for starting fires inside of WTC 7.^{14,15}

As all of the emergency responder restructuring operations were underway, three people became temporarily trapped inside WTC 7. Two New York City employees had gone to the OEM Center on the 23rd floor and found no one there.¹⁶ As they went to get into an elevator to go downstairs, the lights inside WTC 7 flickered as WTC 2 collapsed. At that point, the elevator they were attempting to catch no longer worked, so they started down the staircase. When they got to the 6th floor, WTC 1 collapsed, the lights went out in the staircase, the sprinklers (at an unspecified location) came on briefly, and the staircase filled with smoke and debris. The two men went back to the 8th floor, broke out two windows, and called for help. Fire fighters on the ground saw them and went up the stairs.

A security officer for one of the businesses in the building headed back up to a floor in the 40s after WTC 2 collapsed to see if all his personnel were out of the building. He was accompanied by a police officer, but the police officer had trouble breathing around the 10th floor and exited the building. The security officer had reached the 30th floor when the building shook as WTC 1 collapsed, and the stairwell became dark. He began to descend and stopped at the 23rd floor to see if anyone was on the OEM floor. He opened the door to check for staff that might have been present and saw that the area was filled with smoke. He made it down to the 7th floor, where he stopped because he could not see or breathe at this

¹⁰ PA Interview 3, fall 2003.

¹¹ FDNY Interviews 30 and 31, winter 2004.

¹² FDNY Interview 3, winter 2004.

¹³ PAPD Interview 1, fall 2003.

¹⁴ FDNY Interview 19, winter 2004.

¹⁵ In some cases, the floors that were identified in the interviews were corroborated by a second interviewee or by a specific landmark, such as the cafeteria. In other cases, the floor assignments should be considered approximate.

¹⁶ WTC 7 Interviews 2041604 and 1041704, spring 2004.