

lower level of WTC 7. However, they could not determine if the fuel tanks were involved with the fires burning in the building. FDNY personnel reported that they did not see any indication of burning liquid fuels before the building collapsed.¹²

Following the collapse of the WTC towers large fires were burning in the rubble, WTC 5, and WTC 6 were burning and additional fires were scattered throughout the area. Damaged fire department apparatus and other vehicles were burning on the streets causing dangerous conditions for emergency responders with the possibility of fuel tank failures and explosions from burning tires. It is evident over the time period when WTC 7 was burning that FDNY was focused on preventing the loss of additional lives, providing medical assistance for the injured, and attempting to rescue trapped individuals. The fire department was actively working these issues and conducting fire suppression operations where it directly affected rescue operations in occupied buildings and the collapse debris field.^{11,12}

Therefore, at approximately 2:30 p.m., FDNY officers who had evaluated the condition of WTC 7, the availability of fire fighting resources (including water supply) for operations at WTC 7, and the potential dangers for conducting operations inside WTC 7 decided that it was not worth the additional risk to human life. They decided to abandon the building completely, and the final order was given to evacuate the site around the building.^{12,23}

6.7 ACTIVITY AFTER APPROXIMATELY 2:30 P.M. EDT

NIST was unable to find much information regarding the details of the emergency response activity after the decision to abandon WTC 7. This order also terminated the ongoing rescue and firefighting operations at WTC 6 and on the rubble pile of WTC 1. Firefighters and other emergency responders were withdrawn from the WTC 7 area, and the building continued to burn. As the day progressed, the safety zone was moved several city blocks further away from the building. Also, the FDNY Command Post was moved further north and was eventually established at West and Chambers Streets.³⁴ The FDNY Field Command Unit was also operating at the same location. At this time, all FDNY operations relating to WTC 7 were now centered at this Command Post and with the Field Command Unit. No emergency responders were operating within the collapse zone of WTC 7.

According to Con Edison records, electric power to the lower Manhattan substation at WTC 7 was shut down at 4:33 p.m. (Appendix A).

6.8 FINDINGS

- The loss of numerous firefighters, company officers, and chief officers in the collapses of WTC 1 and WTC 2 led to a changing command structure for the rest of the morning, as new command posts were established and several different chief officers took command and relinquished command of operations at the WTC site.
- Following the collapses of the two towers, FDNY was focused on rescuing personnel trapped in the debris field and providing aid to the injured. At approximately 1:00 p.m., FDNY considered the possibility of fighting fires in WTC 7.

³⁴ FDNY Interview 20, winter 2004.