

The NYPD and FDNY did not consider roof rescue a viable strategy for general evacuation. First, the NYPD and FDNY policies for roof operations were focused mainly on providing emergency responders with access into the building above the fire floors for firefighting, conventional rescue, and comforting occupants. Roof rescue was considered a measure of last resort to be used, for example, to assist occupants with medical emergencies. Second, although on September 11, an NYPD aviation unit was early on the scene to consider the possibility, smoke and heat conditions at the top of the towers prevented the conduct of safe roof operations, despite repeated attempts. Even if it had been possible for a helicopter to gain access to the roof, only a very small fraction of the large number of people trapped above the impact zone could have been rescued before the towers collapsed. Nonetheless, perhaps as an indication of the dire situation in the top floors of the towers, at least two decedents tried to get to the roof and found the roof access locked in both the WTC towers. Personnel at the WTC 1 Security Control Center on the 22nd floor attempted to electronically release the doors to the roof, but were unsuccessful due to damage to the computerized control system.

PAPD

The roles of the PAPD were to establish security at the WTC and to conduct evacuation operations.

PAPD officers were performing their normal law enforcement duties at the WTC site when the attack on WTC 1 occurred. Several additional PAPD teams were dispatched from various locations from around the city and from Jersey City, with some arriving before the collapse of WTC 2 and reporting to PAPD personnel at the WTC 1 lobby Fire Command Desk. There were dozens of PAPD officers on site and on orders to report to the site. With the collapse of WTC 2, the PAPD Police Desk (in WTC 5) and the Command Center were evacuated. Many of the emergency response records were lost initially, but were recovered some days later.

Interdepartmental Interactions

The coordination of communications and operations between the responding authorities at the WTC site was a challenge for all emergency responders working that morning. The short time duration between the initial attack and the collapse of the towers, coupled with the large number of responders and their staggered arrivals, compounded the difficulty of establishing a unified operation.

FDNY (and the Emergency Medical Services), NYPD, PAPD, The Port Authority, and OEM were attempting to work together. These efforts were stymied by a lack of existing protocols that clearly defined authorities and responsibilities, communications systems problems, and multiple major attacks and threats. Although there was merit to having the FDNY and NYPD Command Posts separated, there was no uniform means for communicating between the two Command Posts at the time when WTC 2 collapsed. FDNY and NYPD were primarily operating as independent organizations based on their operational responsibilities.

7.2.4 Responder Access

Fighting fires in the upper levels of tall buildings is not the same as fighting fires in buildings that are less than 100 ft high. In the case of the WTC towers, the people needing assistance were mostly many stories above the ground, and climbing tens of flights of stairs was the only way upward for the emergency