

**Federal Building and Fire Safety Investigation of the  
World Trade Center Disaster**

**Structural Fire Response and  
Probable Collapse Sequence of  
World Trade Center Building 7**

**VOLUME 1**



**NIST NCSTAR 1-9**

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**ABSTRACT**

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# NIST NCSTAR 1-9

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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### Acronyms

ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASTM	ASTM International
BPS	Building Performance Study
FCD	Fire Command Desk
FDNY	The Fire Department of the City of New York
FDS	Fire Dynamics Simulator
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FSI	Fire Structure Interface
IBC	International Building Code
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NYC	New York City
NYCBC	New York City Building Code
NYPD	New York City Police Department
NYS	New York State
OEM	New York Mayor's Office of Emergency Management
PANYNJ	The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
PAPD	Port Authority Police Department
SFRM	sprayed fire-resistive material
SSB	Solomon Smith Barney
USC	United States Code
WTC	World Trade Center
WTC 1	World Trade Center 1 (North Tower)
WTC 2	World Trade Center 2 (South Tower)
WTC 7	World Trade Center 7

**Abbreviations and Conversion Factors**

°C	degrees Celsius	$T (^{\circ}\text{C}) = 5/9 [T (^{\circ}\text{F}) - 32]$
°F	degrees Fahrenheit	
ft	feet	
gal	gallon	$1 \text{ gal} = 3.78 \times 10^{-3} \text{ m}^3$
in.	inch	
kg	kilogram	
kip	1,000 lb	
ksi	1,000 lb/in. <sup>2</sup>	
lb	pound	$1 \text{ lb} = 0.453 \text{ kg}$
m	meter	$1 \text{ m} = 3.28 \text{ ft}$
µm	micrometer	
min	minute	
MJ	megajoule	
MW	megawatt	
psi	pounds per square inch	
s	second	
T	temperature	



## PREFACE

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### Genesis of This Investigation

Immediately following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) on September 11, 2001, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Society of Civil Engineers began planning a building performance study of the disaster. The week of October 7, as soon as the rescue and search efforts ceased, the Building Performance Study Team went to the site and began its assessment. This was to be a brief effort, as the study team consisted of experts who largely volunteered their time away from their other professional commitments. The Building Performance Study Team issued its report in May 2002, fulfilling its goal “to determine probable failure mechanisms and to identify areas of future investigation that could lead to practical measures for improving the damage resistance of buildings against such unforeseen events.”

On August 21, 2002, with funding from the U.S. Congress through FEMA, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) announced its building and fire safety investigation of the WTC disaster. On October 1, 2002, the National Construction Safety Team Act (Public Law 107-231), was signed into law. (A copy of the Public Law is included in Appendix A). The NIST WTC Investigation was conducted under the authority of the National Construction Safety Team Act.

The goals of the investigation of the WTC disaster were:

- To investigate the building construction, the materials used, and the technical conditions that contributed to the outcome of the WTC disaster.
- To serve as the basis for:
  - Improvements in the way buildings are designed, constructed, maintained, and used;
  - Improved tools and guidance for industry and safety officials;
  - Recommended revisions to current codes, standards, and practices; and
  - Improved public safety.

The specific objectives were:

1. Determine why and how WTC 1 and WTC 2 collapsed following the initial impacts of the aircraft and why and how WTC 7 collapsed;
2. Determine why the injuries and fatalities were so high or low depending on location, including all technical aspects of fire protection, occupant behavior, evacuation, and emergency response;
3. Determine what procedures and practices were used in the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of WTC 1, 2, and 7; and
4. Identify, as specifically as possible, areas in current building and fire codes, standards, and practices that warrant revision.

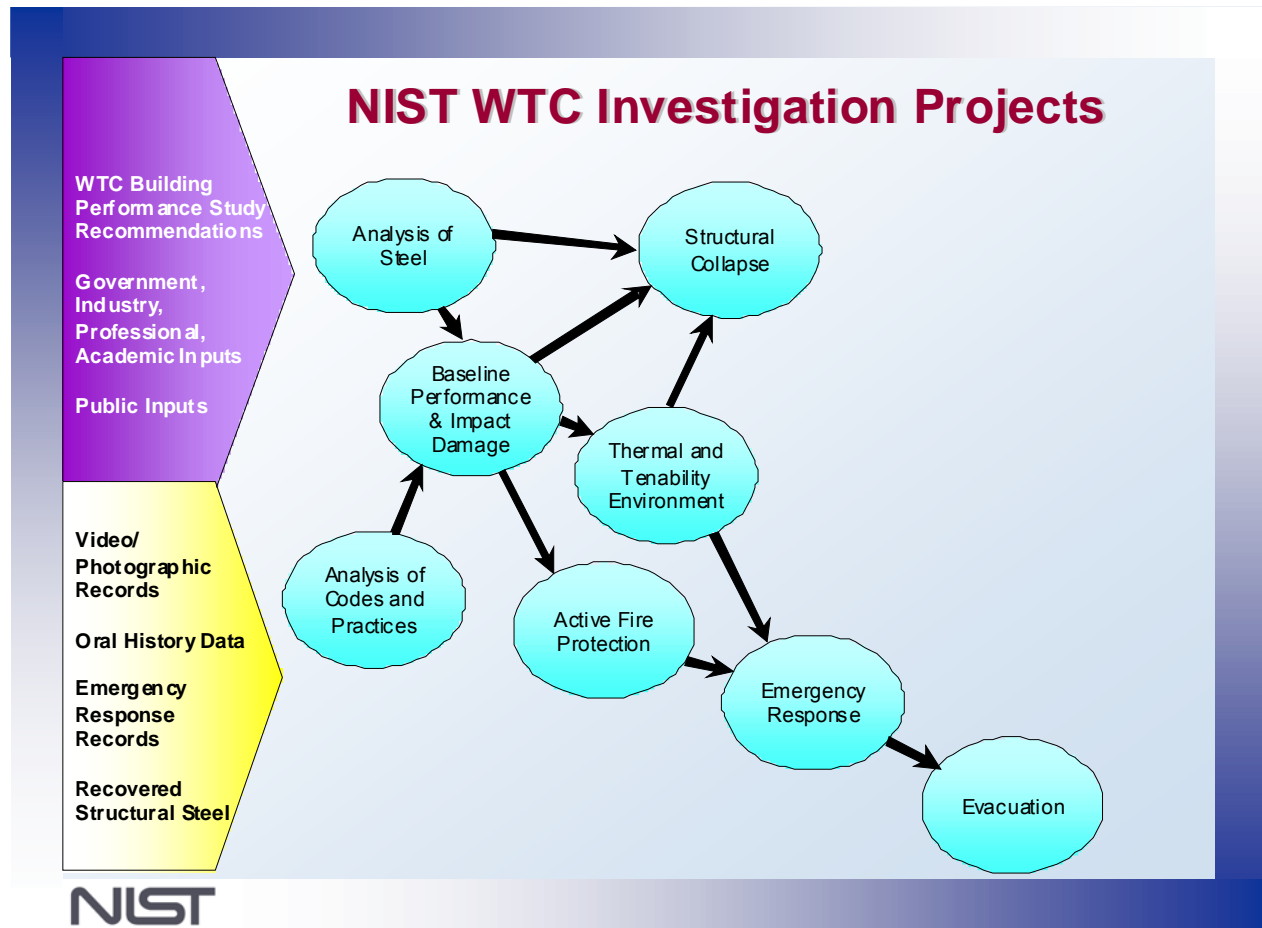
NIST is a nonregulatory agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The purpose of NIST investigations is to improve the safety and structural integrity of buildings in the United States, and the focus is on fact finding. NIST investigative teams are authorized to assess building performance and emergency response and evacuation procedures in the wake of any building failure that has resulted in substantial loss of life or that posed significant potential of substantial loss of life. NIST does not have the statutory authority to make findings of fault nor negligence by individuals or organizations. Further, no part of any report resulting from a NIST investigation into a building failure or from an investigation under the National Construction Safety Team Act may be used in any suit or action for damages arising out of any matter mentioned in such report (15 USC 281a, as amended by Public Law 107-231).

## Organization of the Investigation

The National Construction Safety Team for this Investigation, appointed by the then NIST Director, Dr. Arden L. Bement, Jr., was led by Dr. S. Shyam Sunder. Dr. William L. Grosshandler served as Associate Lead Investigator, Mr. Stephen A. Cauffman served as Program Manager for Administration, and Mr. Harold E. Nelson served on the team as a private sector expert. The Investigation included eight interdependent projects whose leaders comprised the remainder of the team. A detailed description of each of these eight projects is available at <http://wtc.nist.gov>. The purpose of each project is summarized in Table P-1, and the key technical components are illustrated in Fig. P-1.

**Table P-1. Federal building and fire safety investigation of the WTC disaster.**

<b>Technical Area and Project Leader</b>	<b>Project Purpose</b>
Analysis of Building and Fire Codes and Practices; Project Leaders: Dr. H. S. Lew and Mr. Richard W. Bukowski	Document and analyze the code provisions, procedures, and practices used in the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the structural, passive fire protection, and emergency access and evacuation systems of WTC 1, 2, and 7.
Baseline Structural Performance and Aircraft Impact Damage Analysis; Project Leader: Dr. Fahim H. Sadek	Analyze the baseline performance of WTC 1 and WTC 2 under design, service, and abnormal loads, and aircraft impact damage on the structural, fire protection, and egress systems.
Mechanical and Metallurgical Analysis of Structural Steel; Project Leader: Dr. Frank W. Gayle	Determine and analyze the mechanical and metallurgical properties and quality of steel, weldments, and connections from steel recovered from WTC 1, 2, and 7.
Investigation of Active Fire Protection Systems; Project Leader: Dr. David D. Evans; Dr. William Grosshandler	Investigate the performance of the active fire protection systems in WTC 1, 2, and 7 and their role in fire control, emergency response, and fate of occupants and responders.
Reconstruction of Thermal and Tenability Environment; Project Leader: Dr. Richard G. Gann	Reconstruct the time-evolving temperature, thermal environment, and smoke movement in WTC 1, 2, and 7 for use in evaluating the structural performance of the buildings and behavior and fate of occupants and responders.
Structural Fire Response and Collapse Analysis; Project Leaders: Dr. John L. Gross and Dr. Therese P. McAllister	Analyze the response of the WTC towers to fires with and without aircraft damage, the response of WTC 7 in fires, the performance of composite steel-trussed floor systems, and determine the most probable structural collapse sequence for WTC 1, 2, and 7.
Occupant Behavior, Egress, and Emergency Communications; Project Leader: Mr. Jason D. Averill	Analyze the behavior and fate of occupants and responders, both those who survived and those who did not, and the performance of the evacuation system.
Emergency Response Technologies and Guidelines; Project Leader: Mr. J. Randall Lawson	Document the activities of the emergency responders from the time of the terrorist attacks on WTC 1 and WTC 2 until the collapse of WTC 7, including practices followed and technologies used.



**Figure P-1. Technical components of the federal building and fire safety investigation of the WTC disaster.**

### National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee

The NIST Director also established an advisory committee as mandated under the National Construction Safety Team Act. The initial members of the committee were appointed following a public solicitation. These were, with their terms in parentheses:

- Paul Fitzgerald, Executive Vice President (retired) FM Global, National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee Chair (2002-2009)
- John Barsom, President, Barsom Consulting, Ltd. (2002-2011).
- John Bryan, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland (2002)
- David Collins, President, The Preview Group, Inc. (2002-2010)
- Glenn Corbett, Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2002- )
- Philip DiNunno, President, Hughes Associates, Inc.(2002- )

- Robert Hanson, Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan (2002-2009)
- Charles Thornton, Co-Chairman and Managing Principal, The Thornton-Tomasetti Group, Inc. (2002-2011)
- Kathleen Tierney, Director, Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Center, University of Colorado at Boulder (2002- )
- Forman Williams, Director, Center for Energy Research, University of California at San Diego (2002-2011)

This National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee provided technical advice during the Investigation and commentary on drafts of the Investigation reports prior to their public release. NIST has benefited from the work of many people in the preparation of these reports, including the National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee. The content of the reports and recommendations, however, are solely the responsibility of NIST.

### **Public Outreach**

During the course of this Investigation, NIST held public briefings and meetings (listed in Table P-2) to solicit input from the public, present preliminary findings, and obtain comments on the direction and progress of the Investigation from the public and the Advisory Committee.

NIST maintained a publicly accessible Web site during this Investigation at <http://wtc.nist.gov>. The site contained extensive information on the background and progress of the Investigation.

### **NIST's WTC Public-Private Response Plan**

The collapse of the WTC buildings has led to broad reexamination of how tall buildings are designed, constructed, maintained, and used, especially with regard to major events such as fires, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks. Reflecting the enhanced interest in effecting necessary change, NIST, with support from Congress and the Administration, has put in place a program, the goal of which is to develop and implement the standards, technology, and practices needed for cost-effective improvements to the safety and security of buildings and building occupants, including evacuation, emergency response procedures, and threat mitigation.

**Table P-2. Public meetings and briefings of the WTC Investigation.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Principal Agenda</b>
June 24, 2002	New York City, NY	Public meeting: Public comments on the Draft Plan for the pending WTC Investigation.
August 21, 2002	Gaithersburg, MD	Media briefing announcing the formal start of the Investigation.
December 9, 2002	Washington, DC	Media briefing on release of the Public Update and NIST request for photographs and videos.
April 8, 2003	New York City, NY	Joint public forum with Columbia University on first-person interviews.
April 29–30, 2003	Gaithersburg, MD	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on plan for and progress on WTC Investigation with a public comment session.
May 7, 2003	New York City, NY	Media briefing on release of May 2003 Progress Report.
August 26–27, 2003	Gaithersburg, MD	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on status of the WTC investigation with a public comment session.
September 17, 2003	New York City, NY	Media and public briefing on initiation of first-person data collection projects.
December 2–3, 2003	Gaithersburg, MD	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on status and initial results and release of the Public Update with a public comment session.
February 12, 2004	New York City, NY	Public meeting on progress and preliminary findings with public comments on issues to be considered in formulating final recommendations.
June 18, 2004	New York City, NY	Media/public briefing on release of June 2004 Progress Report.
June 22–23, 2004	Gaithersburg, MD	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on the status of and preliminary findings from the WTC Investigation with a public comment session.
August 24, 2004	Northbrook, IL	Public viewing of standard fire resistance test of WTC floor system at Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.
October 19–20, 2004	Gaithersburg, MD	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on status and near complete set of preliminary findings with a public comment session.
November 22, 2004	Gaithersburg, MD	NCST Advisory Committee discussion on draft annual report to Congress, a public comment session, and a closed session to discuss pre-draft recommendations for WTC Investigation.
April 5, 2005	New York City, NY	Media and public briefing on release of the probable collapse sequence for the WTC towers and draft reports for the projects on codes and practices, evacuation, and emergency response.
June 23, 2005	New York City, NY	Media and public briefing on release of all draft reports for the WTC towers and draft recommendations for public comment.
September 12–13, 2005	Gaithersburg, MD	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on disposition of public comments and update to draft reports for the WTC towers.
September 13–15, 2005	Gaithersburg, MD	WTC Technical Conference for stakeholders and technical community for dissemination of findings and recommendations and opportunity for the public to make technical comments.
December 14, 2006	Teleconference	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on status of WTC 7 investigation and draft annual report to Congress, with a public comment session.
December 16, 2007	Teleconference	NCST Advisory Committee meeting on status of WTC 7 investigation and draft annual report to Congress, with a public comment session.

The strategy to meet this goal is a three-part, NIST-led, public-private response program that includes:

- A federal building and fire safety investigation to study the most probable factors that contributed to post-aircraft impact collapse of the WTC towers and the 47 story WTC 7 building, and the associated evacuation and emergency response experience.
- A research and development (R&D) program to (a) facilitate the implementation of recommendations resulting from the WTC Investigation, and (b) provide the technical basis for cost-effective improvements to national building and fire codes, standards, and practices that enhance the safety of buildings, their occupants, and emergency responders.
- A dissemination and technical assistance program (DTAP) to (a) engage leaders of the construction and building community in ensuring timely adoption and widespread use of proposed changes to practices, standards, and codes resulting from the WTC Investigation and the R&D program, and (b) provide practical guidance and tools to better prepare facility owners, contractors, architects, engineers, emergency responders, and regulatory authorities to respond to future disasters.

The desired outcomes are to make buildings, occupants, and first responders safer in future disaster events.

### **National Construction Safety Team Reports on the WTC Investigation**

This report documents the Investigation findings regarding WTC 7 and the techniques and technologies by which these technical results were achieved. A summary report appears as NIST NCSTAR 1A, and a support document, NIST NCSTAR 1-9A, presents the technical details of the WTC 7 collapse analysis. The titles of the full set of Investigation publications are:

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

On September 11, 2001, at 8:46:30 a.m. EDT, five hijackers flew American Airlines Flight 11 (AA 11), a Boeing 767-200ER aircraft, into the north face of World Trade Center (WTC) 1 at a speed of about 440 mph. At 9:02:59 a.m., five other hijackers flew United Airlines Flight 175, also a Boeing 767-200ER, into the south face of WTC 2 at about 540 mph. The aircraft impacts did considerable damage to the structure of the towers, but the towers remained standing. The impacts also triggered fires on multiple floors simultaneously. Such fires further weakened the structural systems of WTC 1 and WTC 2 and led to the collapse of both towers. WTC 2 collapsed first at 9:58:59 a.m. EDT, followed by the collapse of WTC 1 at 10:28:22 a.m. EDT.

The collapse of WTC 1 caused structural damage to WTC 7, a 47 story building to the north of the WTC complex. Damage to WTC 7 included severed exterior columns on the lower floors. The collapse of WTC 1 also resulted in initiation of fires on at least 10 floors of WTC 7, extensive window breakage on the south face of WTC 7; and loss of city water that supplied the automatic sprinkler system in the lower zone of WTC 7. After nearly seven hours of burning, WTC 7 collapsed at 5:20:52 p.m. EDT.

A principal part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) investigation of the WTC disaster was the examination of the WTC 7 collapse. The specific objectives were to:

1. Determine why and how WTC 7 collapsed;
2. Determine all technical aspects of fire protection, occupant behavior, evacuation, and emergency response;
3. Determine what procedures and practices were used in the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of WTC 7; and
4. Identify, as specifically as possible, areas in current building and fire codes, standards, and practices that warrant revision.

This report describes the technical effort to meet these objectives. Much of the material developed to address Objective 3 and some of Objective 2 had appeared in the NIST NCSTAR WTC reports published in September 2005. Relevant content is summarized in this report, with references to the prior reports for those seeking more detail. NIST NCSTAR 1A is a summary report of the sequence of events at WTC 7 on September 11, 2001, the findings of the Investigation, and the NIST recommendations. Additional details on the collapse analysis appear in NIST NCSTAR 1-9A.

## 1.2 TECHNICAL APPROACH

### 1.2.1 Data Gathering

Similar to the investigation into the collapse of the WTC towers, data for WTC 7 were collected from a number of sources and reviewed. Such data included information about the structural geometry, details, and connections; the thickness and condition of the passive fire protection in the building; and recorded observations of debris impact damage and fire spread subsequent to collapse of the WTC towers. Information about the building construction was obtained from original drawings and specifications, reports, and available records from The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ or Port Authority), Silverstein Properties (SP), and a number of contractors that had worked on the design, construction, or modifications to WTC 7. The documents obtained included erection and fabrication shop drawings of the building, which provided detailed information about the floor and column connections. Additional information and documents regarding the layout of the building interior were obtained from WTC 7 tenants. Interviews with emergency responders and building officials provided accounts of the human activity inside the building and around the WTC site. A large number of photographic and videographic records were acquired, enabling extraction of the details of the damage to and fire in the building. While not as plentiful as the imagery for the WTC towers, the WTC 7 evidence was sufficient to guide the reconstruction of the day's events.

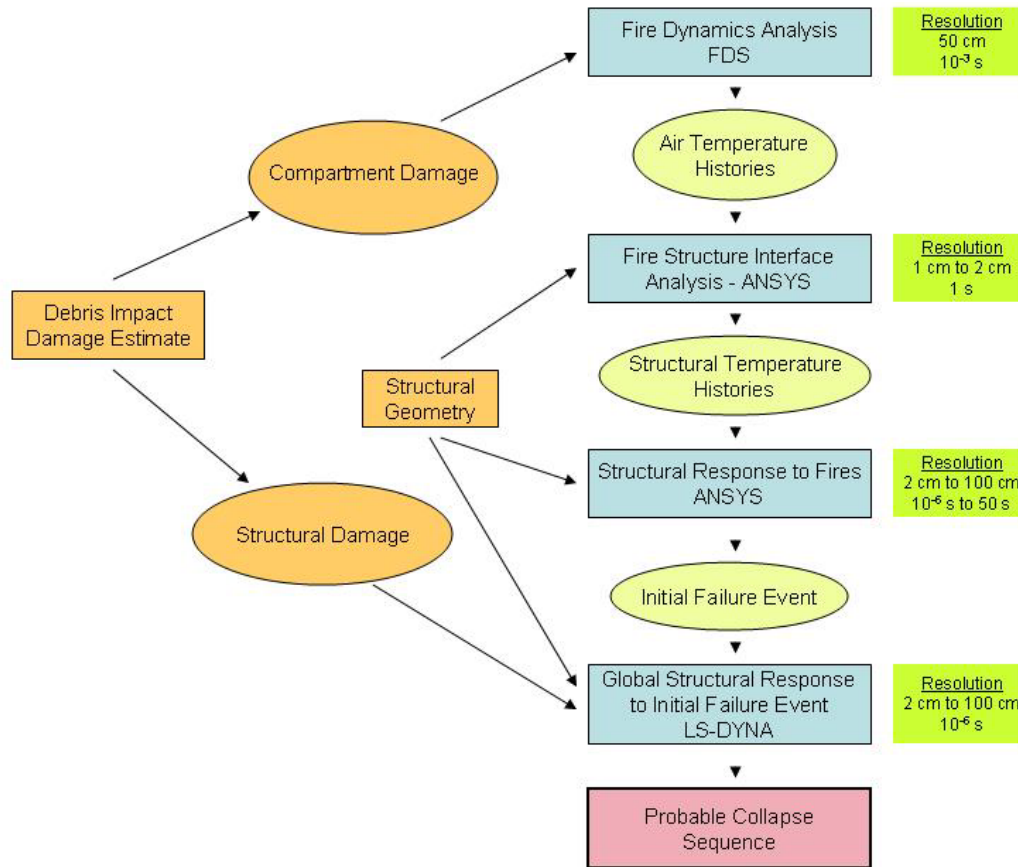
Information about the building design and contents appears in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. The photographic and videographic data are presented in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 contain the descriptions of the activities of the emergency responders and building occupants, respectively.

### 1.2.2 Reconstruction of the Collapse of WTC 7

The probable WTC 7 collapse sequence developed in this Investigation was based on observations from available evidence (photos, videos, and eyewitness accounts) as well as a series of computer simulations that modeled the complete sequence of events leading to the collapse of WTC 7. The analyses accounted for the debris-impact damage resulting from the collapse of WTC 1, the growth and spread of fires, the heating and thermal weakening of structural components, and the progression of local structural failures that led to the collapse of the building. Similar to the analyses conducted for the WTC towers, the analyses of WTC 7 continued to advance the current state of the art and tested the limits of computational capabilities. The collapse analysis of WTC 7 had to include both the failure initiation and propagation sequences to explain the observed collapse sequence. The unprecedented complexity and sophistication of these analyses required the use of various strategies for managing the computational demands, while adequately capturing the essential physics of the problem.

Figure 1-1 is a flowchart of the analysis sequence and interdependencies for the reconstruction of the WTC 7 collapse, which was similar to the analysis sequence for the WTC towers. However, for the analysis of WTC 7, the structural analysis was divided into two steps - the structural response to fire and the structural response to an initial failure event, as indicated in Figure 1-1. The estimate of debris impact damage, which was based on visual evidence, is provided in Chapter 5. Chapter 8 presents the collapse hypotheses evaluated for the collapse of WTC 7. The fire dynamics simulations and the resulting heating of the structure are presented in Chapters 9 and 10, respectively. The analysis of the structural response to the fire to determine the initial failure event (collapse initiation phase) is presented in Chapter 11, and

the global response of WTC 7 to the initial failure event (collapse propagation phase) is provided in Chapter 12. Chapter 13 presents the probable collapse sequence for WTC 7.



**Figure 1-1. WTC 7 analysis sequence and interdependencies.**

The analyses performed to determine the probable collapse sequence for WTC 7 considered the response of the structural system to debris impact damage, temperature-dependent properties of steel and concrete, growth and spread of the fires, and heating of structural components. The structural response analyses relied upon the following information:

- Available architectural, structural, fabrication, and erection drawings of the original building and subsequent building alterations.
- Extent of damage to the building resulting from debris impact from the collapse of the WTC towers.
- Photographic and videographic records with time stamps that documented the observed sequence of events, including fire spread and building collapse.
- Temperature-time histories for structural components and connections for fires in WTC 7 based on fire dynamics simulations and thermal finite element analyses.

- Temperature-dependent mechanical properties of the steels, welds, and bolts used in the construction of WTC 7, including elastic, plastic, and creep properties.
- Column loads due to dead and design live loads shown in the design drawings, used to verify the structural models.

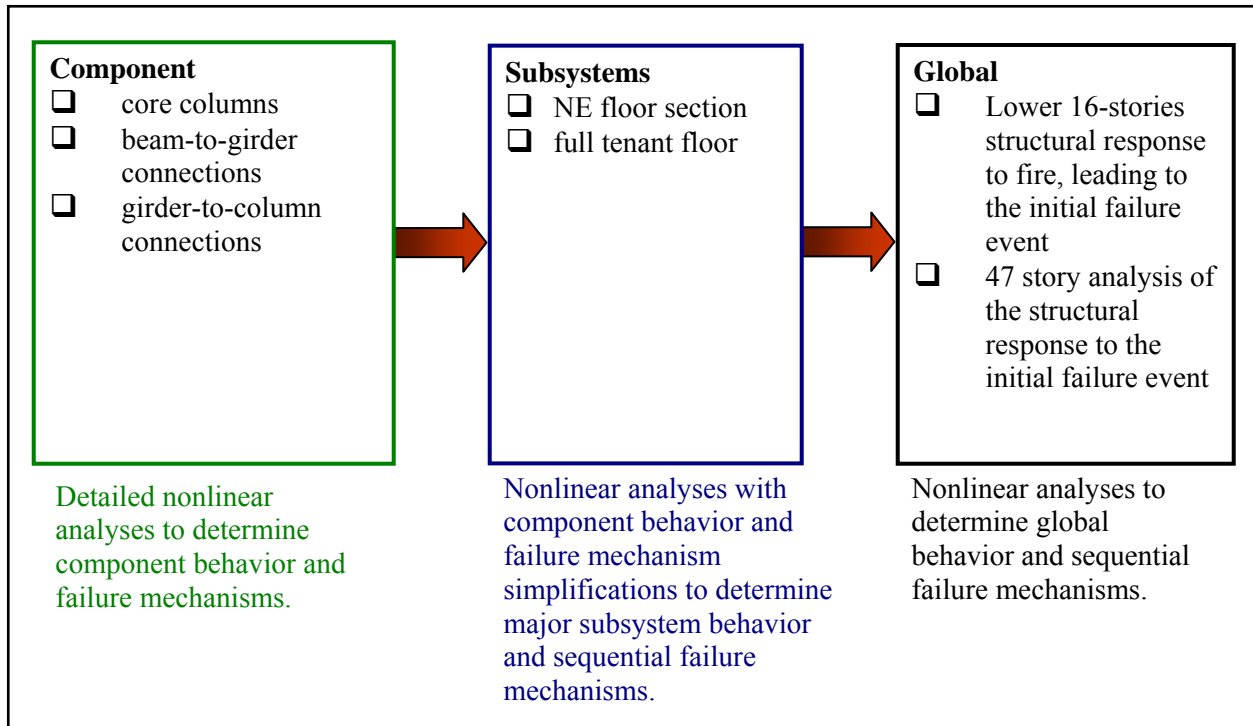
The fire dynamics and thermal analyses were similar to the analyses described in detail in the WTC towers reports. However, there were some differences in the analyses, which are briefly described here.

The major fires in WTC 7 were simulated using the Fire Dynamics Simulator (FDS). The FDS calculations were similar to those conducted for WTC 1 and WTC 2 (NIST NCSTAR 1-5F). There were far fewer photographs and videos of WTC 7 than of the towers. Thus, the details of the WTC 7 fires were not as precise as for the fires in the towers. However, the imagery was sufficient to guide the WTC 7 fire simulations. Unlike the fire simulations for WTC 1 and WTC 2, the fire simulations for WTC 7 were conducted for each floor individually as there were no obvious pathways for the flames and heat to pass from one floor to another, aside from the debris-damaged area in the southwest corner of the building. As described in Chapter 5, sustained and/or late fires were observed on Floors 7 through 9 and 11 through 13. While use was made of the appearance of flames and window breakage in photographs and videos in formulating the simulations, the Investigation Team realized that the absolute timing of the simulations might not align exactly with the timing of the fires on September 11, 2001. In addition, there might have been concealed, yet major fires in the mechanical space on Floors 5 and 6. Thus, a variety of possible fires on Floors 5 and 6 were simulated to determine whether each would have produced a visible telltale and whether they would have been severe enough to weaken key structural elements on those floors.

The Fire Structure Interface (FSI) was used to impose the gas temperatures from the FDS simulations (Chapter 10) on the structural components of WTC 7 (Chapter 2) to predict the evolving thermal state of the building. The FSI created thermal loading data for use by the structural models that simulated the collapse of the building (Chapters 11 and 12). The structural response of WTC 7, simulated to understand the collapse initiation mechanism, was performed using the thermal data. The thermal analysis approach was similar to that used to simulate the fire induced thermal loads on WTC 1 and WTC 2 described in NCSTAR 1-5G. The temperature data for use in the structural analysis of WTC 7 contained thermal data sampled at 30 min intervals for a 6 hour period. For each time step, a set of thermal data was generated that specified the thermal state of the lower 16 stories of the building. Three different thermal response computations were used, all of which represented a realistic and reasonable range of fire scenarios for WTC 7 on September 11, 2001. Case A used the temperature data as obtained from the FDS simulation. Case B increased the FDS gas temperature by 10 percent and Case C decreased the FDS gas temperatures by 10 percent. Given the limited visual evidence, the Investigation Team estimated, using engineering judgment, that a 10 percent change was within the range of uncertainty in the extent and intensity of the fires.

WTC 7 was a large, complex structural system. To include all of the structural components and connections and their associated behavior and failure mechanisms using refined finite element meshes was not possible. The analysis approach used was a variant of the well-established sub-structuring approach, adapted for the analysis of structures with highly nonlinear behavior that progressed from individual components to major subsystems to global systems, as shown in Figure 1-2.





**Figure 1-2. Structural analysis sequence.**

Component structural analyses were conducted to identify critical behavior and failure mechanisms that contributed to the global structural response of WTC 7. These component analyses included (1) buckling of a core column, (2) beam-to-girder connections under thermal loading, and (3) girder-to-column connections under thermal loading. Subsystem analyses were then performed that incorporated the behavior and failure mechanisms identified in the component studies. The subsystem analyses included (1) the northeast corner of a typical floor and (2) a full tenant floor, both under gravity and fire loads. Modifications were made to reduce the model size and complexity and enhance computational performance without adversely affecting the accuracy of the results. Whenever modeling modifications were used, they were validated against the detailed component model results. The two global analyses explained above incorporated critical behavior and failure mechanisms, determined from component and subsystem analyses, while making necessary modifications in the level of modeling detail.

Two structural models of WTC 7, including floor systems, exterior walls, and core structure were developed and executed to understand the response of the building to debris impact damage and subsequent fire effects and to develop the collapse hypothesis.

- The first model, an implicit analysis developed using ANSYS, estimated the structural response to elevated temperatures of the lower 16 stories of the building, where the fires grew and spread, until an initial failure event appeared imminent, due to thermally-induced structural damage and failures (Chapter 11). This model accounted for the temperature-dependent behavior of the structural members and connections in the fire-affected floors, including thermal expansion, stiffness and strength degradation at elevated temperatures, and the failure modes of the connections under fire.

- The second model, an explicit analysis developed using LS-DYNA, estimated the structural response of the full 47 story structure to the initial failure event due to fire (from the 16 story ANSYS model), and the vertical and horizontal progression of failures that led to global collapse of WTC 7 (Chapter 12). This model accounted for the potential for progressive collapse in the building, including buckling of columns due to loss of lateral restraint, dynamic effects associated with failure progression, and impact of falling floors. The progressive collapse analysis included three steps: vertical progression of failure, horizontal progression of failure, and global collapse.

The three thermal response cases (A, B, and C) were used in the ANSYS analysis. Based on ANSYS model results, it became apparent as the analyses progressed that the sequential failures that were occurring were essentially at the same locations and with similar failure mechanisms. However, as might be expected, the failures were shifted in time, i.e., Case C failures occurred at a later time than the same failures in Case A, and Case A failures occurred at a later time than Case B failures. As a result, only the fire-induced damage produced by Case B temperatures was carried forward as the initial condition for the LS-DYNA analysis (Chapter 12), since the damage occurred in the least computational time (about 6 months).

### **1.3 WTC 7 REPORTS**

This report, NIST NCSTAR 1-9, is a detailed technical report of the investigation and analyses. It is written for technical experts in each of the relevant disciplines. The following reports further document the investigation of the collapse of WTC 7.

NIST NCSTAR 1A is a final summary report of the investigation of the collapse of WTC 7, and includes an accounting for readers who are not experts in each of the disciplines relevant to the investigation. It also includes the NIST recommendations to reduce the severity of the outcome of future mishaps in tall buildings.

NIST NCSTAR 1-9A is a detailed technical report of the LS-DYNA model development and analyses. This report is summarized in Chapter 12 of this report.

Previous Investigation reports that documented WTC 7 conditions or events include:

NIST NCSTAR 1-1, summarized the design, construction, and maintenance of structural and life safety systems in WTC 7, as well as the WTC towers. Additional details on these subjects for WTC 7 can be found in the following technical reports:

- NIST NCSTAR 1-1A: Design And Construction Of Structural Systems
- NIST NCSTAR 1-1C: Maintenance and Modifications to Structural Systems
- NIST NCSTAR 1-1D: Fire Protection and Life Safety Provisions Applied to the Design and Construction and Post-construction Provisions Applied after Occupancy
- NIST NCSTAR 1-1E: Comparison of Codes, Standards, and Practices in Use at the Time of the Design and Construction

- NIST NCSTAR 1-1G: Amendments to the Fire Protection and Life Safety Provisions of the New York City Building Code by Local Laws Adopted while WTC Buildings Were in Use
- NIST NCSTAR 1-1I: Post-construction Modifications to Fire Protection, Life Safety, and Structural Systems
- NIST NCSTAR 1-1J: Design, Installation, and Operation of Fuel Systems for Emergency Power

NIST NCSTAR 1-4 summarized the design and installation of the active fire protection systems in WTC 7 and a description of the normal operation of fully functional systems and their potential effect on controlling the fires on September 11, 2001. Additional details on these subjects for WTC 7 can be found in the following technical reports:

- NIST NCSTAR 1-4B: Fire Suppression Systems
- NIST NCSTAR 1-4C: Fire Alarm Systems
- NIST NCSTAR 1-4D: Smoke Management Systems

Chapter 6 of NIST NCSTAR 1-6A provided the thermophysical properties for Monokote MK-5, the gypsum-based sprayed fire-resistive material (SFRM) used to insulate the WTC 7 steel.

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## Chapter 2

# BUILDING CONSTRUCTION, CODES, AND STANDARDS

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### 2.1 HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

WTC 7 was a 47 story commercial office building located immediately to the north of the main WTC complex. It occupied the block bounded by Vesey Street on the south, Barclay Street on the north, Washington Street on the west, and West Broadway on the east. Located approximately 370 ft (110 m) from the north side of WTC 1, it was connected to the WTC complex by a 120 ft wide elevated plaza and a 22 ft wide pedestrian bridge at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor level. Its location relative to the WTC Plaza is shown in Figure 2–1. Completed in 1987, WTC 7 contained approximately 2 million ft<sup>2</sup> of floor area.

WTC 7 was trapezoidal in plan with dimensions of approximately 329 ft on the longer side, 247 ft on the shorter side, 144 ft wide, and 610 ft high. The building was constructed over a pre-existing electrical substation owned by Consolidated Edison (Con Edison). The original plans for the Con Edison substation included supporting a high-rise building, and the foundation was sized for the planned structure. However, the final design for WTC 7 had a larger footprint than originally envisioned and accommodations were made in the foundation, as described in Section 2.4.1. Over the years, numerous structural modifications were made throughout the building, mainly to suit its largest tenant, Salomon Brothers Inc., later to become Salomon Smith Barney and now Citigroup. One of the more substantial modifications was the addition of a penthouse, referred to as the east penthouse, which was used to house a chiller plant and cooling towers for Salomon Brothers. Also, large portions of Floors 41 and 43 were removed on the east side of the building to accommodate trading floors for Salomon Brothers. The removed floor areas were subsequently restored after the trading activity was moved to another venue.

Above Floor 7, the building had typical steel framing for high-rise construction. The floor systems had composite construction with steel beams supporting normal weight concrete slabs on metal deck, with a floor thickness of 5.5 in. The core and exterior columns supported the floor system and carried their loads to the foundation. The exterior moment frame also resisted wind forces. Many of the columns above Floor 7 did not align with the foundation columns, so braced frames, transfer trusses, and transfer girders were used to transfer loads between these column systems, primarily between Floors 5 and 7. Floors 5 and 7 were heavily reinforced concrete slabs on metal deck, with thicknesses of 14 in. and 8 in., respectively. A complete description of the structure is given in Section 2.4.

The architectural design was performed by Emory Roth & Sons, P.C. The structural engineer of record was the Office of Irwin G. Cantor, and the mechanical engineer was P.C. Syska & Hennessy, P.C. Tishman Construction Corporation was the general contractor.

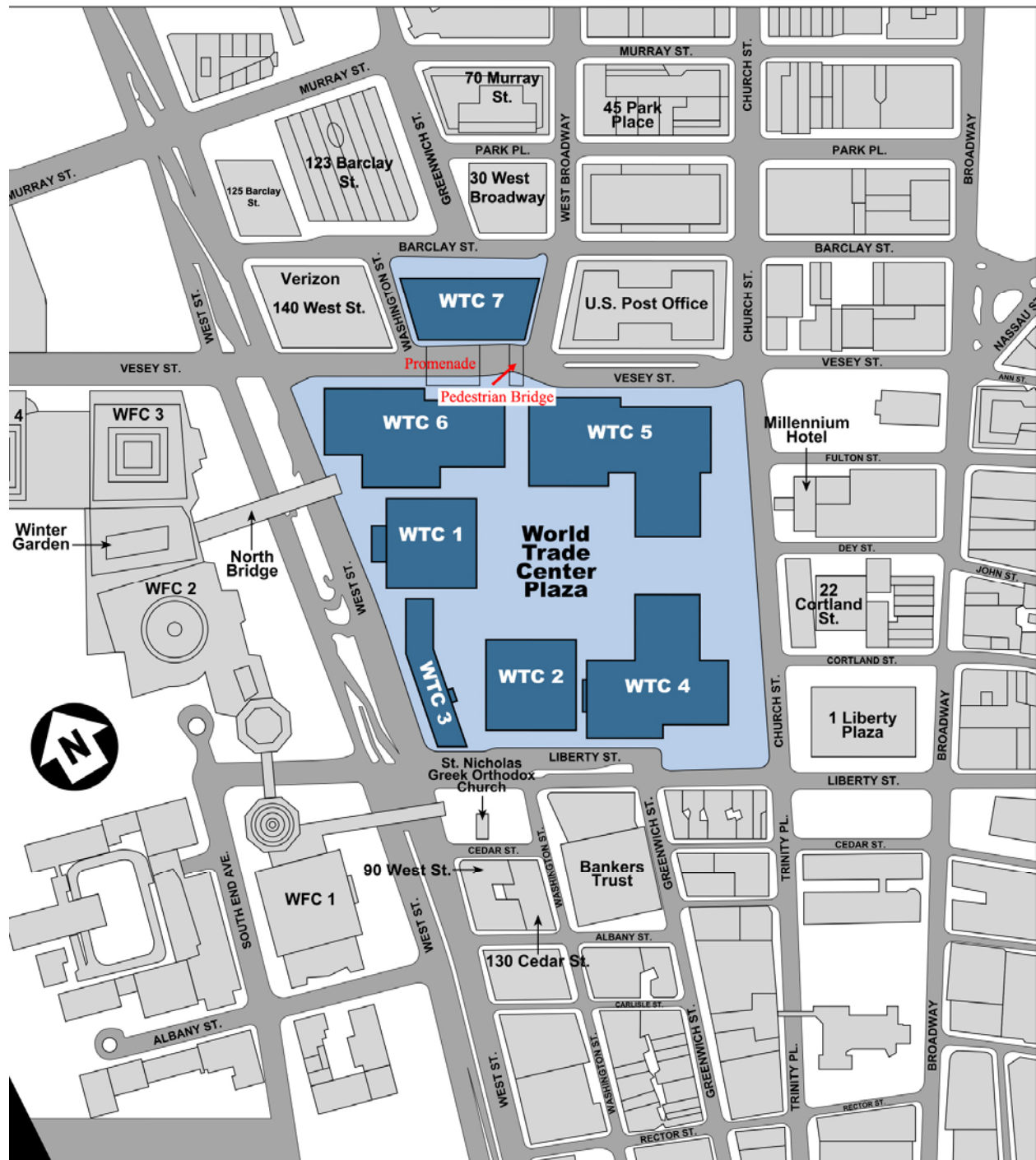


Figure 2-1. WTC complex.

## 2.2 BUILDING CODES

Unlike the World Trade Center Towers (WTC 1 and WTC 2), which were developed and owned by The Port Authority, WTC 7 was developed on land owned by the Port Authority, but the building was owned by Seven World Trade Company and Silverstein Development Corporation, General Partners. It was designed and constructed as a “Tenant Alteration Project” of the Port Authority.

When WTC 7 was designed in the mid-1980s, the 1968 NYC Building Code (NYCBC) with amendments was in effect. The Project Specifications for WTC 7, issued in 1984, required that the structural steel be designed in accordance with the then current NYC Building Code. The November, 1978 edition of the Specifications for the Design, Fabrication and Erection of Structural Steel for Buildings published by the American Institute of Steel Construction as contained in the Eighth Edition of the AISC *Manual of Steel Construction* (AISC 1980) was the current steel design specification document. A comparison of the 1968 NYCBC with contemporaneous building codes is presented in NIST NCSTAR 1-1E.

The Port Authority developed a tenant alteration process for any modifications to leased spaced in the WTC complex to maintain structural integrity and fire safety. The Tenant Construction Review Manual contained technical criteria to be used in planned alterations for tenants. The manual included the applicable standards and review criteria to be used by the Port Authority Engineering Department. Alteration designs were to be completed by design professionals, and at the completion of the work, as-built drawings were to be submitted to the Port Authority. Since WTC 7 was built as a “Tenant Alteration Project,” its design and construction followed the requirements of the 1984 edition of the Tenant Construction Review Manual. Details of the Tenant Construction Review Manual are found in NIST NCSTAR 1-1C.

Although the PANYNJ was not subject to the NYCBC, WTC 7 was intended to be designed in accordance with the NYCBC and all applicable reference standards. Based on citations in the construction documents, the 1968 NYCBC, including amendments to January 1, 1985, appears to have been used for the design and construction provisions of WTC 7.

Based on the height, area, primary occupancy classification, and installation of a fire sprinkler and standpipe system, the minimum construction type (permitted by the NYCBC) was type 1-C (2 h protected) classification. However, some documentation, including some building drawings and specifications for bidders on the contract for fireproofing<sup>1</sup> the structural steel, indicate a Type 1-B (3 h protected) classification. Chapter 11 in NIST NCSTAR 1-1D gives a summary of fire protection measures used in WTC 7, which were consistent with a Type 1-C classification.

After the publication of the WTC investigation reports in September 2005, documents which contained a set of measured thicknesses of the sprayed fire-resistive material (SFRM) used in WTC 7 were obtained. The SFRM thickness measurements were consistent with a Type 1-B classification, with the exception of the floor system. A Type 1-B classification required a 3 h fire resistance rating on the columns and a 2 h

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<sup>1</sup> The application of sprayed fire-resistive materials (SFRM) is often referred to as “fireproofing.” The sprayed fire-resistive materials themselves are also sometimes called “fireproofing.” In this report, SFRM is used to describe the thermal insulation spray-applied to protect the steel, and the term fireproofing is used to describe the act of applying the SFRM. In quotations from contract documents or correspondence, the term “sprayed-on fireproofing” is used for SFRM; in such cases, the original wording is preserved. In no case did the Investigation Team presume that the protected steel was actually “fireproof.”

fire resistance rating on the floors. For a sprinklered building, a Type 1-C classification required a 2h fire resistance rating on the columns and a 1.5 h fire resistance rating on the floors.

Based on the SFRM measurements and project correspondence, the columns had SFRM thicknesses consistent with a 3 h fire resistance rating, the metal deck had SFRM thicknesses consistent with a 2 h fire resistance rating, and the floor framing (beams and girders) had SFRM thicknesses consistent with a 2 h fire resistance rating. The SFRM for the structural system is presented in Section 2.5. In this report, Type 1-C classification was assumed, but the actual classification may have been type 1-B.

## **2.3 CON EDISON SUBSTATION BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

The Con Edison substation was constructed in 1967 and consisted of a three-story steel framed structure with cast-in-place concrete floors and walls. It was located on the north side of the site and extended approximately 40 ft north of the north face of WTC 7, as shown in Figure 2–2. Its southern boundary was irregular, but extended roughly two-thirds of the width of WTC 7.

Some of the WTC 7 columns framed into the substation columns. During the construction of WTC 7, heavy plates were welded to the tops of the existing substation columns, which then supported the new building columns. The exterior columns above the Con Edison structure that did not align with the columns of the Con Edison structure were supported by a series of transfer girders. The arrangements of the transfer girders are described in detail in Section 0.

## **2.4 WTC 7 BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

### **2.4.1 Foundations**

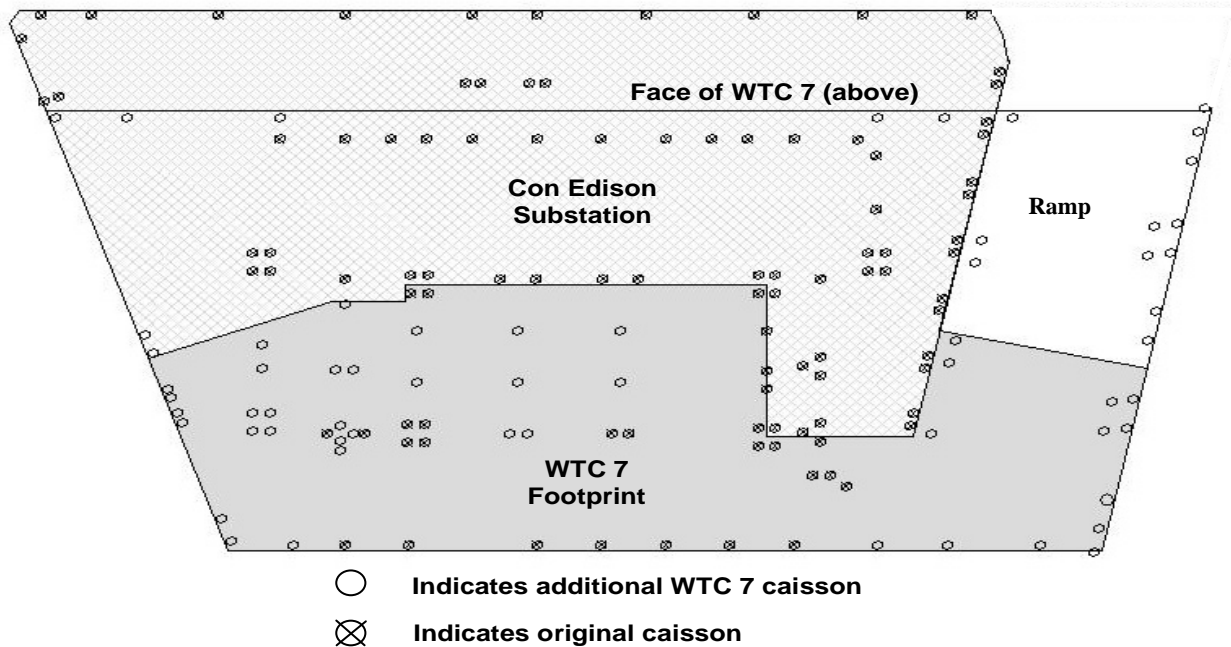
WTC 7 and the electrical substation were supported on caisson foundations. When the substation was constructed in 1967, provision was made for a future office tower by including capacity to carry both the substation and the weight of a future building. Caissons were also installed in the property adjacent to the substation for the proposed future building. When WTC 7 was constructed approximately 20 years later, it was significantly larger than the originally proposed building, and required additional caissons to be installed, as shown in Figure 2–2.

The typical caisson consisted of several components: a 30-in., 36-in., or 42-in. diameter steel casing, a heavy rolled or built-up steel core shape, vertical reinforcing bars, spiral reinforcing, and concrete fill. At the base of the caisson core, a pattern of shear studs was placed to help transfer the load from the steel caisson core into the encompassing concrete, from which it passed into the rock. The caissons extended through the soil, and were socketed (seated) in the bedrock, approximately 60 ft below the surface. There were vertical caissons as well as battered (or sloped) caissons to carry the lateral load. Above the caissons were heavy grillages composed of built up steel girders. Grillages transferred loads between the building columns and the caissons.

The distance between the caisson grillages and the first floor varied between 8 ft and 30 ft. This region was braced by reinforced concrete walls with thicknesses varying from 1 ft to 2.5 ft. Many of the WTC 7 steel columns were embedded in these walls, and supporting steel braces were made composite by the addition of shear studs along the height of the embedment.



Areas between the concrete walls were backfilled with compacted gravel fill and then covered with a concrete slab on grade or framed slab to form closed cells and bring the structure up to the required elevation. In some cases, the area was left unfilled and used to house fuel tanks.



Source: McAllister 2002.

**Figure 2–2. WTC 7 foundations.**

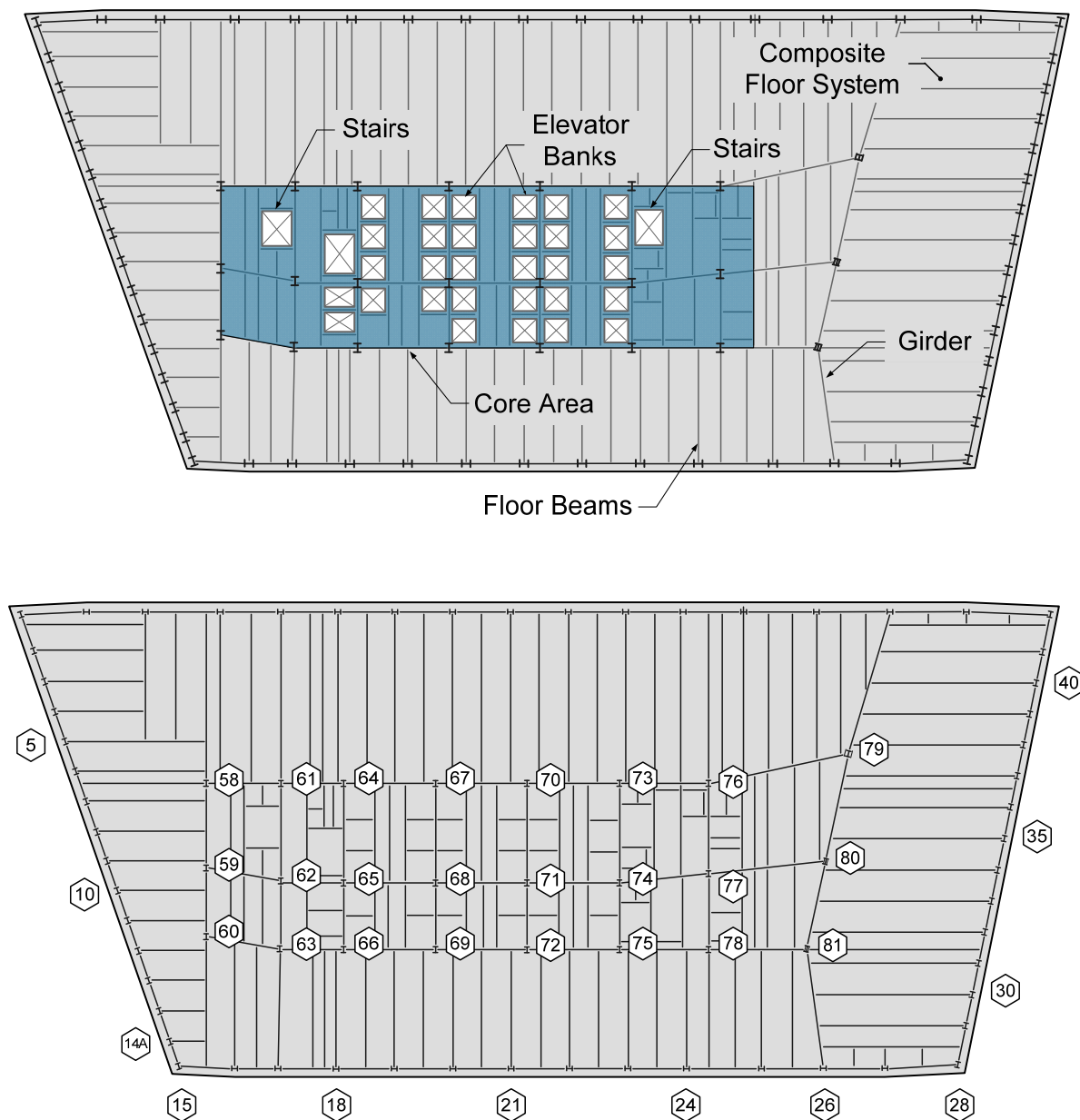
## 2.4.2 Floor Systems

### Typical Floor Systems Floors 8 to 45

The typical floor framing system, shown in Figure 2–3, was composed of rolled steel wide-flange beams with composite metal decking and concrete slabs. Floors 8 through 45 had essentially the same framing plan, but the core layout varied over the height of the building.

Floors 8 through 45 had floor slabs that were composed of a 3 in. deep, 20 gage metal deck with 2.5 in. of 3,500 psi normal weight concrete above the top of the metal deck, for a total floor thickness of 5.5 in. There was one layer of 6 x 6 W1.4xW1.4 welded wire fabric (WWF) within the concrete. The drawings showed a second layer of WWF placed over girders at the slab edges. The fastening requirements for the metal deck were not shown on the drawings, but standard practice provided puddle welds 12 in. on-center at the beams and side lap welds, screws, or button-punching at 36 in. on-center between adjacent panels of deck. The drawings contained a note calling for 1.5 in. deep, 20 gage metal deck with 4 in. of concrete topping (5.5 in. total) in the elevator lobbies, where there was a 3 in. floor finish specified by the architect.

Typical floor framing for Floors 8 through 20 and Floors 24 through 45 consisted of 50 ksi wide-flange beams and girders. Between the core columns was a grid of beams and girders. Core girders ranged in size from W16x31 to W36x135, depending on the span and load. Beams spanned between the core and the exterior of the building, at approximately 9 ft on-center spacing. On the north and east sides, the



Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2-3. Floors 8 through 45 plan.**

typical floor beam was a W24x55 with 28 shear studs, spanning approximately 53 ft. On the south side, the typical floor beam was a W16x26 with 24 shear studs spanning 36 ft. Between the exterior columns were moment connected girders as part of the lateral system of the building.

Floors 21 to 23 had slightly heavier steel framing than the typical floors. Core girders were generally one size class larger than the typical floor; the beams between the core and the south facade were W16x31 instead of W16x26. There were additional studs on the W24x55 beams on the north and west sides.

Most of the beams were made composite with the slabs through the use of shear studs. Typically, the shear studs were 0.75 in. in diameter by 5 in. long, spaced 2 ft on center. Studs were not indicated on the design drawings for the girders.

The structural design drawings (Irwin G. Cantor P.C., Structural Engineers 1985) specified design forces for connections and suggested a typical detail, but did not show specific connection designs; this was standard practice on the U.S. east coast. The erection drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985) indicated that design shear forces for the typical beam and girder connections were to be taken from the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC) beam design tables for beams without shear studs, using 1.5 times those forces for beams with shear studs. However, actual connection designs were obtained from fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985a), which provided detailed descriptions of the floor connections and column splices in WTC 7.

Floor beam-to-girder and girder-to-interior column connections were generally a single shear plate or double angle connection, although in several instances, seated connections were used. The typical beam-to-exterior column connections were seated connections. The typical bolt used in the simple shear connections was a 7/8 in. diameter ASTM A325, where ASTM A325 is a standard specification for a structural bolt. The bolt used for heavier brace and moment connections was a 1 in. diameter ASTM A490. Details of the connections used in the floor framing are covered in Chapter 11.

## Other Floors

The remaining floors, Floors 1 through 7 and Floors 46 and 47, were atypical and are described below and in Figure 2–4 through Figure 2–13.

Floor 1 was built adjacent to the substation and included the truck ramp for the WTC complex. The first floor is shown in Figure 2–4. The floor was framed with steel beams that were encased in a formed concrete slab. The floor slab was 14 in. thick, with typical No. 5 reinforcement bars (5/8 in. rebar) at a 10 in. to 12 in. spacing and No. 6 rebar at 9 in. spacing for the bottom reinforcement; No. 5 rebar at 12 in. spacing was used for temperature reinforcement. The southeast portion of the floor above the WTC truck ramp had a 6 in. formed concrete slab with No. 4 rebar at 12 in. spacing for top and bottom reinforcement; No. 4 rebar at 18 in. spacing was used for temperature reinforcement.

The floor slabs for Floors 2, 3, 4, and 6 had a 3 in. deep, 20 gage metal deck with 3 in. of 3,500 psi normal weight concrete, for a total floor thickness of 6 in. Floors 2 and 3 were also partial floors adjacent to the substation. In addition, they had a floor opening on the south side to form the atrium above the ground level lobby (see Figure 2–5 and Figure 2–6). Floor 4 was above the substation and had a large opening over most of the south side of the building, to form a double-height space above the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby (see Figure 2–7). Floor 6 had two openings on the floor to form a double-height mechanical space,

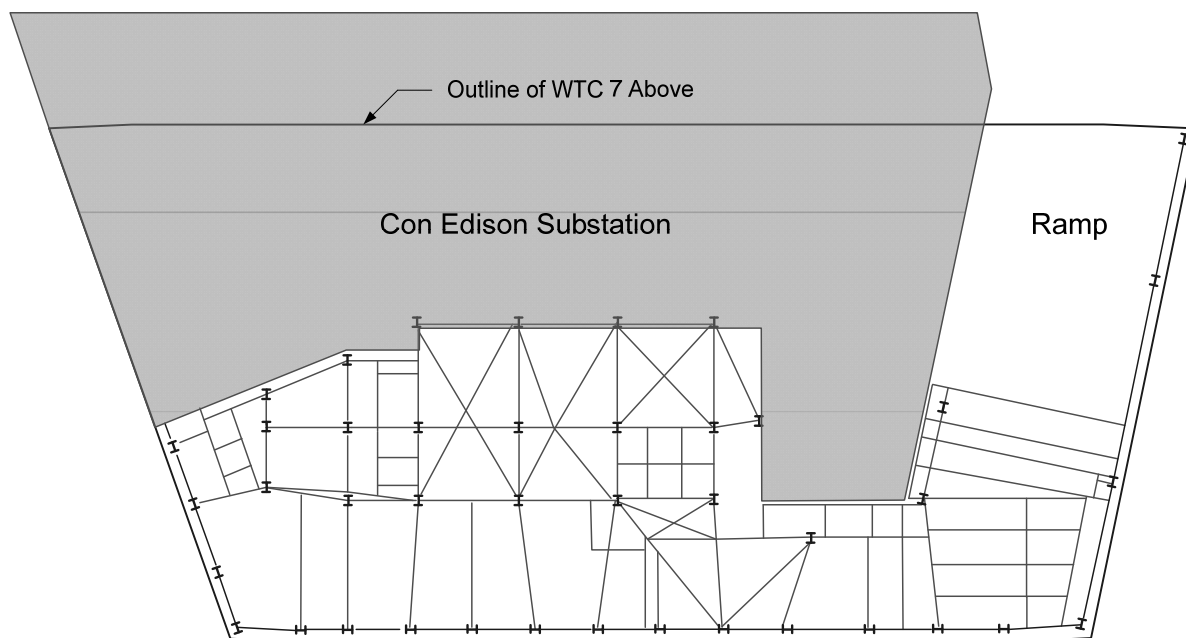
one on the east side and the other one in the southwest corner (Figure 2–10). Truss 2 and Column 80 were located in this double-height mechanical space.

The Floor 5 slab was 11 in. of 3,500 psi normal weight concrete on top of a 3 in. deep, 18 gage metal deck for a total slab thickness of 14 in. The slab was heavily reinforced, with No. 7 rebar at 12 in. spacing for top reinforcement in both directions and No. 9 rebar at 12 in. spacing for bottom reinforcement that acted as additional diaphragm chord reinforcement in many areas. This floor also had 36 ksi steel WT sections (W, or wide-flange, sections cut in half to look like a ‘T’ section) embedded in the 11 in. concrete slab above the deck. The WT sections were designed to act as a horizontal truss within the plane of the floor between the exterior and core columns (Figure 2–8 and Figure 2–9).

The 7<sup>th</sup> floor slab consisted of 5 in. of 3,500 psi normal weight concrete on top of a 3 in. deep, 18 gage metal deck, for a total floor thickness of 8 in. The slab was reinforced with No. 5 rebar at 6 in. on center in both directions. Regions of the slab on the south side of the building had 8 in. of formed concrete without any metal deck. In these regions, two layers of steel reinforcement were provided (Figure 2–11).

Originally, Floors 41 and 43 had the east half removed to provide two-story trading floors. Columns in these areas and areas of Floors 40 and 42 were reinforced to provide adequate capacity for the additional height and change in use by tenants. By 2001, Floors 41 and 43 had been restored to provide full floor space.

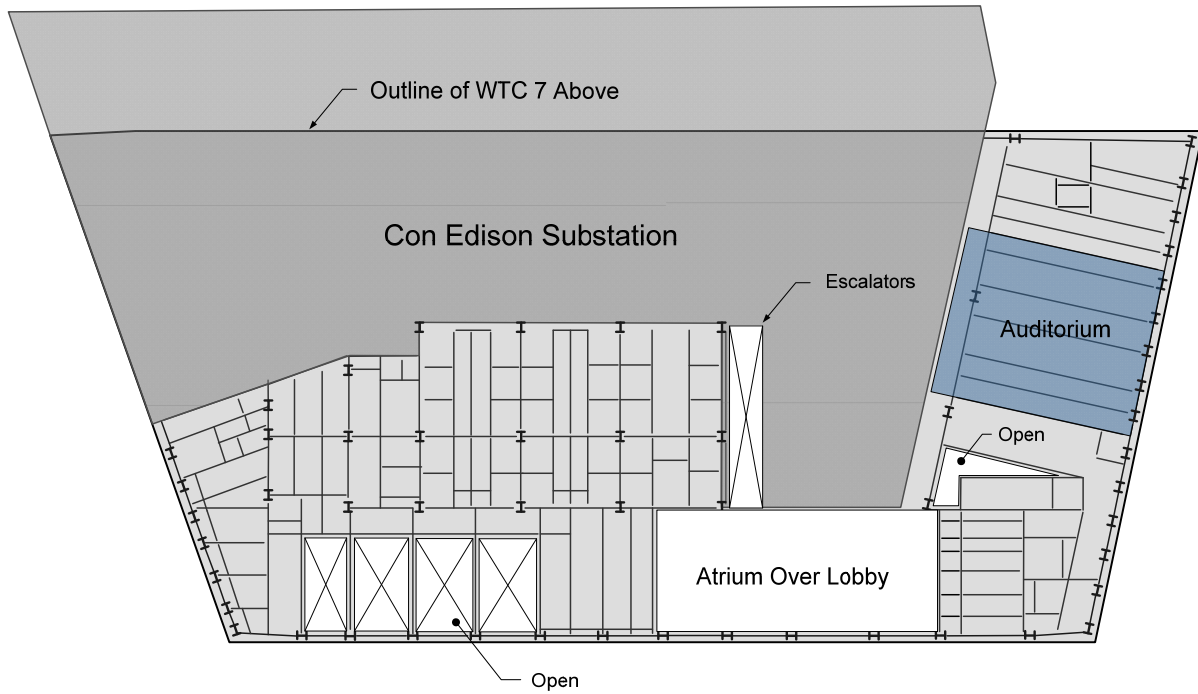
The 46<sup>th</sup> floor had heavier framing to support the cooling towers on the north side, (with W36x150 between posts and W36x260 under the posts) and the setback roof on the south side (with W21x44 between posts and W36x150 under the posts). There was a 6 in. reinforced concrete slab in a portion of the core and under the cooling towers (see Figure 2–12).



Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

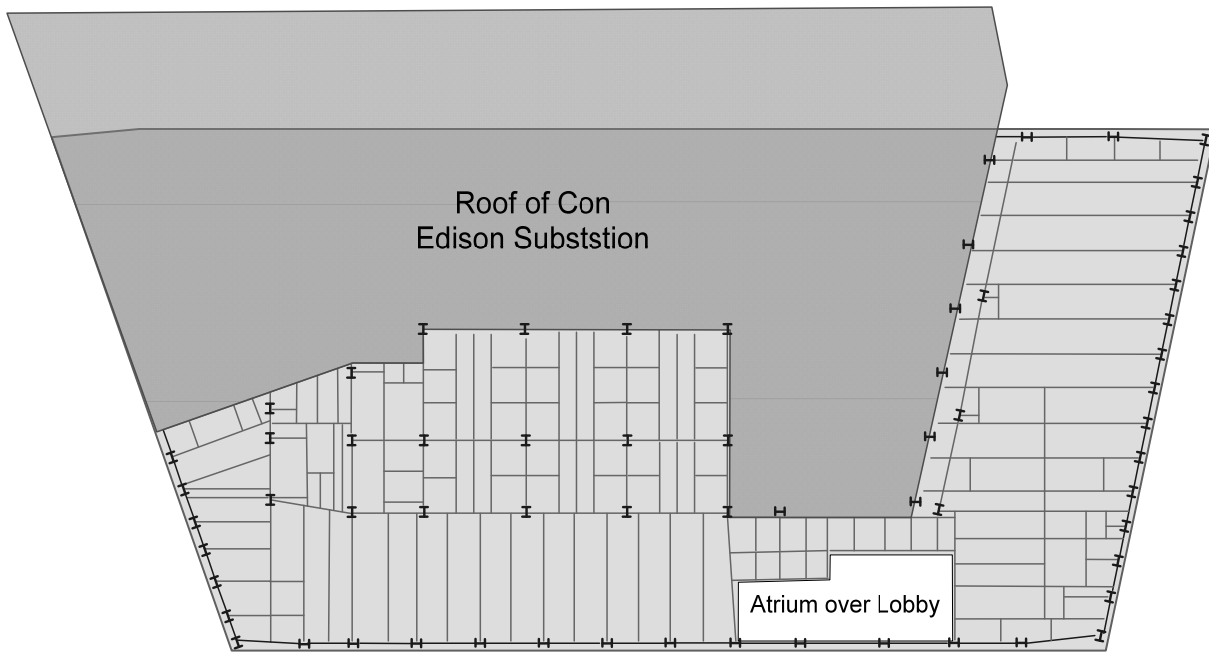
**Figure 2–4. Floor 1 plan.**

Floor 47 had a double height space extending from the 46<sup>th</sup> floor to the underside of the roof for the cooling towers on the north side. There was also a setback roof on the south side at Floor 46 (Figure 2–13).



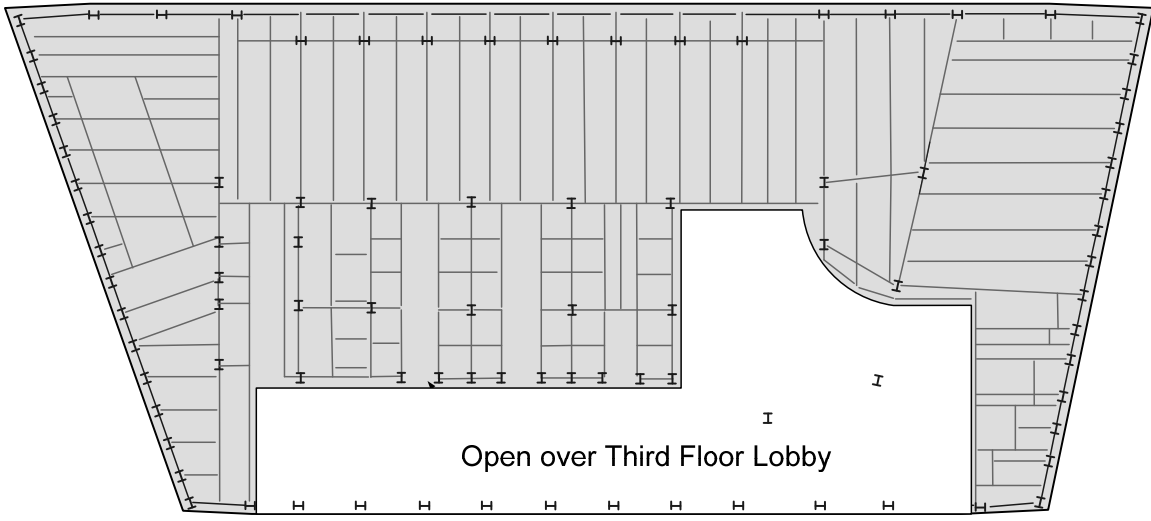
Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2–5. Floor 2 plan.**



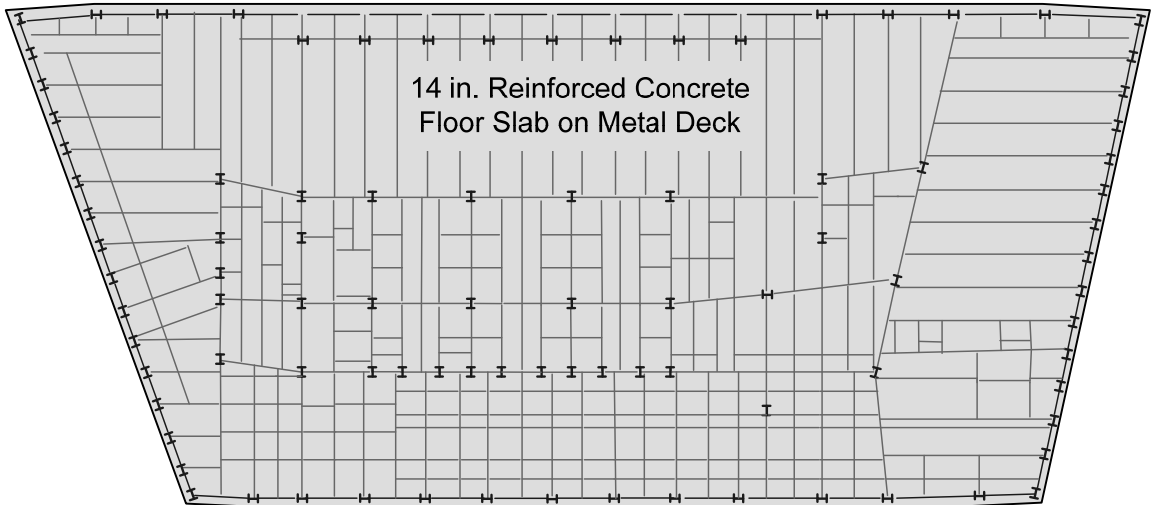
Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2–6. Floor 3 plan.**



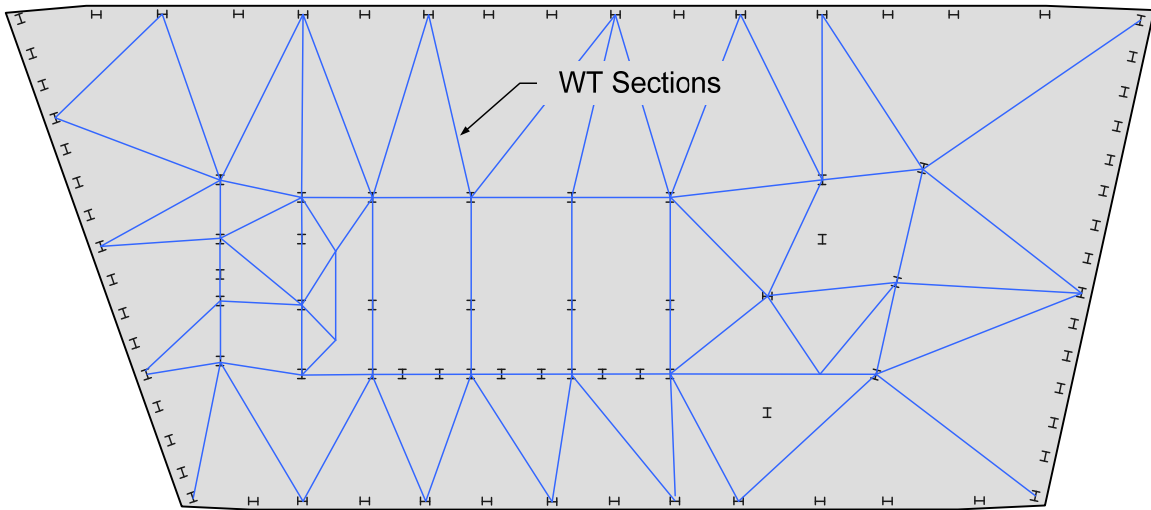
Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2-7. Floor 4 plan.**



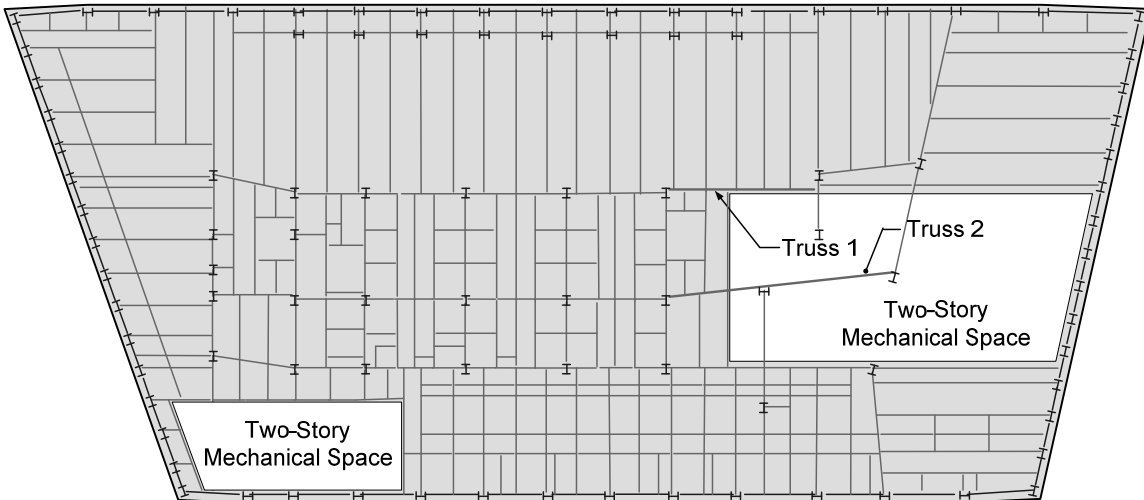
Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2-8. Floor 5 plan.**



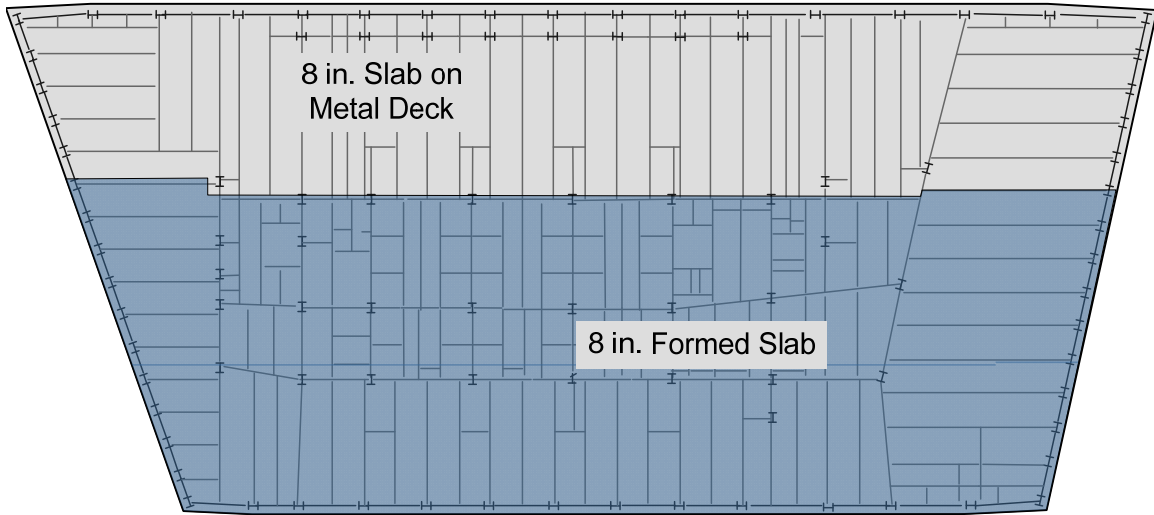
Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2–9. Floor 5 diaphragm plan.**



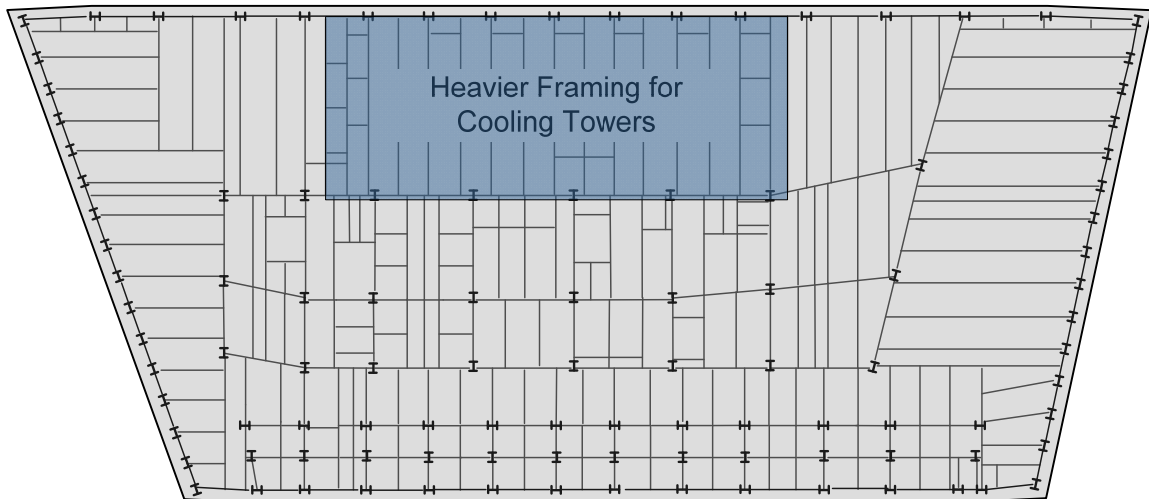
Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2–10. Floor 6 plan.**



Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

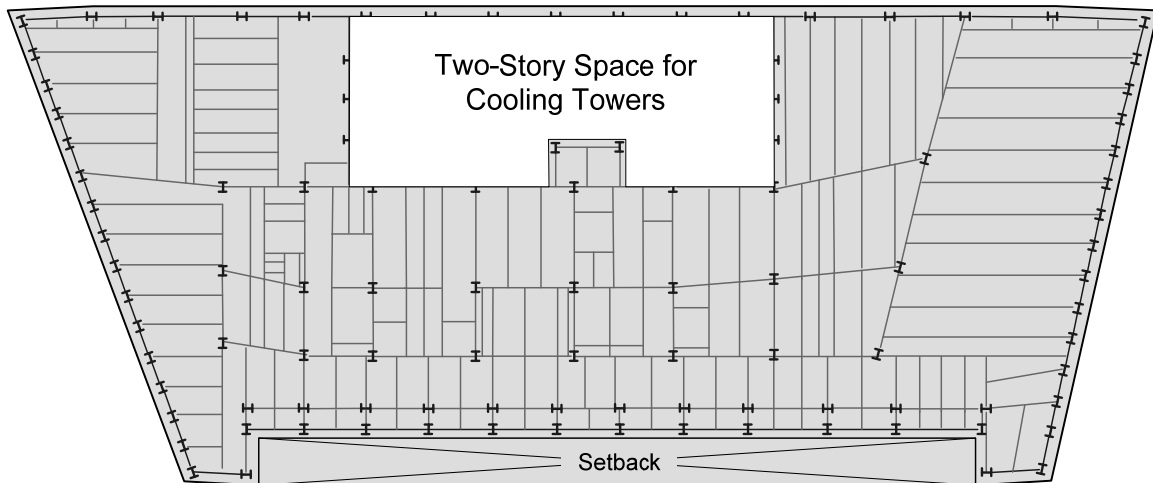
**Figure 2–11. Floor 7 plan.**



Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2–12. Floor 46 plan.**





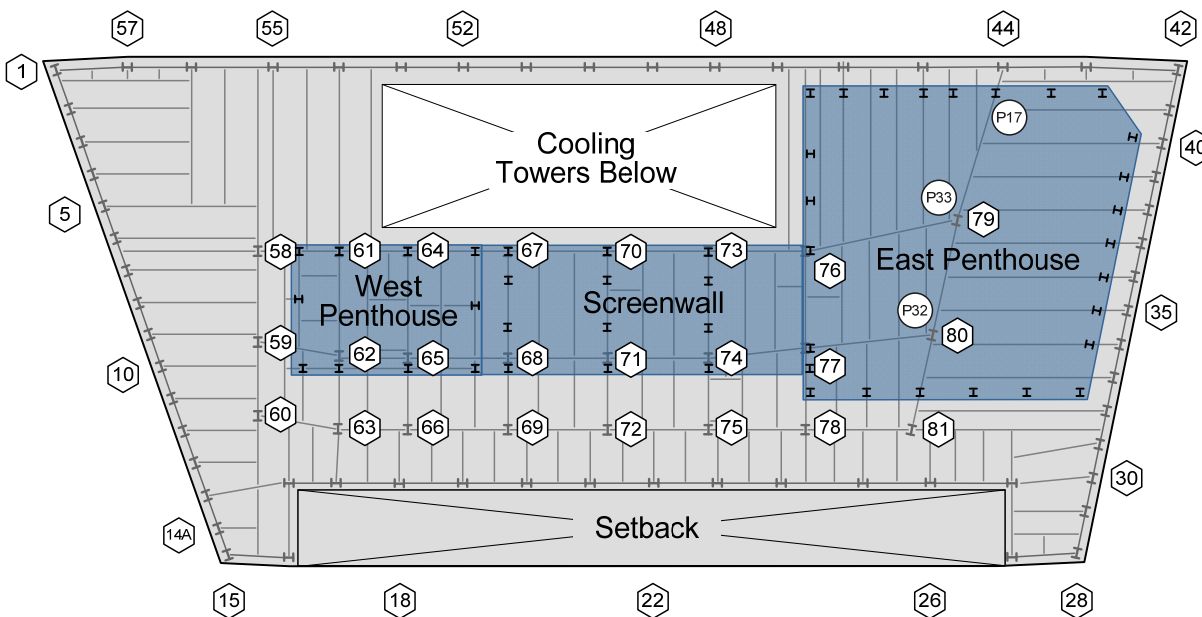
Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 2-13. Floor 47 plan.**

### Roof and Penthouses

The roof had a concrete slab on metal deck. The top of the slab was sloped, from an 8.5 in. thickness to a 5.5 in. thickness, to provide drainage. The WWF in this slab was 6x6 W2.4xW2.4, which was 70 percent heavier than at a typical tenant floor. There were slab openings for the cooling towers on the north and the roof setback on the south. The area above the cooling towers was framed in steel, with grating spanning between the beams. A series of diagonal WT6x9 members under the grating provided diaphragm action in this area.

The east penthouse was added to the WTC 7 building in 1990. The roof beams and girders were reinforced using cover plates welded to their lower flanges, and a thick concrete pad was cast to support the air-conditioning equipment housed within the penthouse. Steel columns (or “posts” as they were termed on contract drawings) supported the new penthouse structure. A plan of the roof and penthouse framing is shown in Figure 2-14. The east penthouse posts framed into existing interior columns that fell within the east penthouse footprint (Columns 76, 77, 79, and 80). The other posts were supported by beams at the roof level



Based on structural design drawings (Cantor, 1985)

**Figure 2–14. Roof layout.**

### 2.4.3 Connections in the Floor System

The structural design drawings indicated that the exterior framing (and portions of the core framing at Floors 5 and 7) had moment connections as part of the lateral system for resisting wind loads (Section 2.4.6), that the column splices used a combination of welds and bolts, and that the floor framing had simple shear and seated connections. The structural design and fabrication shop drawings provided details of the connections used in the building. The fabrication shop drawings that were obtained (Frankel Steel Limited 1985) did not contain the stamp of a Professional Engineer; however, connection details were confirmed by photographic records. Details of all connections, including steel section sizes, plate thickness and dimensions, weld sizes, bolts sizes, bolt hole locations, and clearances were taken from approximately 2,500 fabrication shop drawings and used in developing the structural models described in Chapters 11 and 12. These fabrication shop drawings, as well as the structural design drawings and erection drawings, served as the source material for Figure 2–15 through Figure 2–23, as well as for the floor plans and details in all chapters of this report.

The typical connections used in the floor framing are presented here, as these connections were modeled in detail in the ANSYS and LS-DYNA analyses (Chapters 11 and 12). The typical floor framing connection designs are described here with the following designations used in the investigation:

- Hn - Header connection with a single line of n bolts in each angle, for a total of 2n bolts;
- Kn - Knife connection with a single line of n bolts;
- Fn - Fin connection with a single line of n bolts;

- SWC - Seat (either rolled angle or plate) with a single web clip for lateral stability. Typically 2 erection bolts in the seat, and 2 in the web clip angle were installed.
- STC - Seat (either rolled angle or plate) with a clip angle on the top flange for lateral stability. Typically 2 erection bolts in the seat, and 2 in the top flange clip angle were installed.
- STP - Seat (typically a plate) with a plate on the top flange for lateral stability. Typically 2 erection bolts in the seat, and 2 in the top plate were installed.

All floor beams had simple framing connections with high strength bolts. These connections were either shear connections or seated connections. Connections made with double angles were referred to as either header or knife connections.

A header connection consisted of two angles shop fillet-welded to a beam web, and field bolted to either a girder or column, as illustrated in Figure 2–15.

A knife connection was one in which the angles were shop fillet-welded to a girder web or column, and field bolted to a beam or girder web, as illustrated in Figure 2–16.

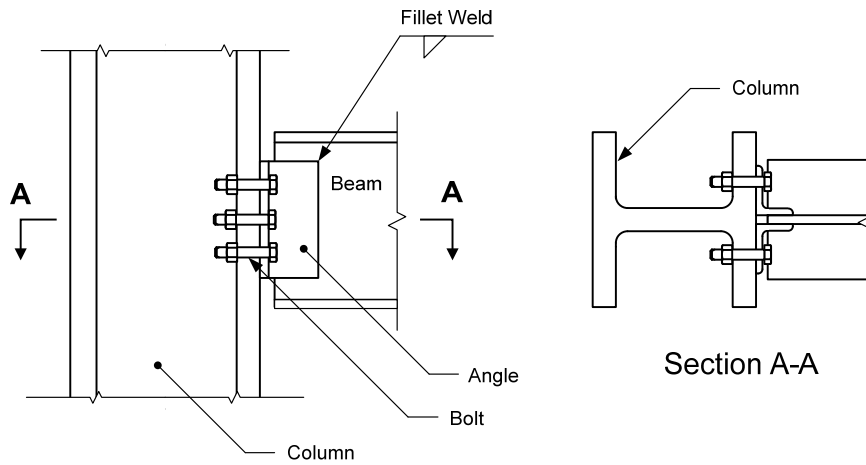
A fin connection consisted of a flat plate that was shop welded to the web and underside of a girder flange using double fillet welds, and field bolted to a beam framing into the girder, as illustrated in Figure 2–17.

Seated connection with web clips (SWC) were used for core floor beams framing into girders. A schematic of a SWC connection is shown in Figure 2–18.

Floor beams or girders that framed into exterior columns had a seated connection with a top plate (STP) or a top clip (STC). The seat was either a rolled angle or plate welded to the column flanges and web. The beam or girder top flange was attached with either a clip angle or plate to provide lateral stability during construction. A schematic of an STP connection, typical of a beam or girder framing into an exterior column on the north or south sides of the building, is shown in Figure 2–19.

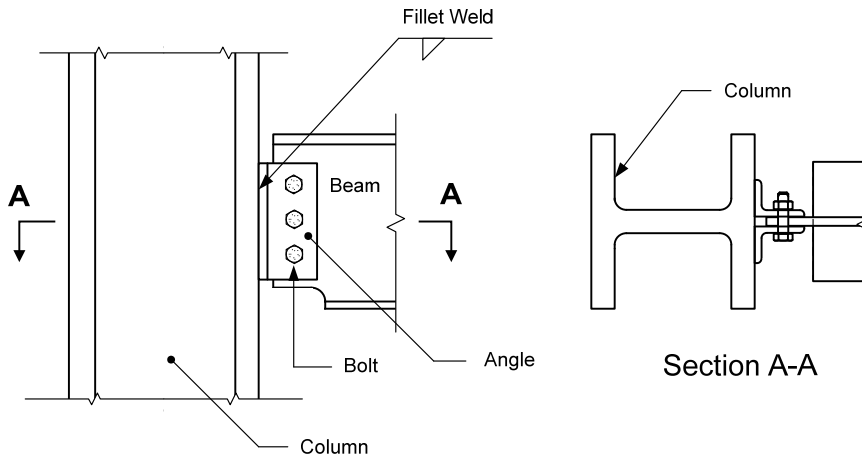
Girders that framed into interior Columns 79 and 81 also had seated connections with a top clip (STC). The seat was either a rolled angle or a seat plate welded to the column. The seat plate at Column 81 was stiffened while the seat plate at Column 79 was supported by a plate welded to the side plates on columns on the lower stories. Figure 2–20 is a schematic of the seat arrangement for Column 79 where side plates were used. The beam or girder top flange was attached to the column with either a clip angle or plate to provide lateral restraint during construction.

Figure 2–21 and Figure 2–22 are diagrams of typical tenant floors that show the locations of the framing connections, based on the shop drawings and review of photographs.



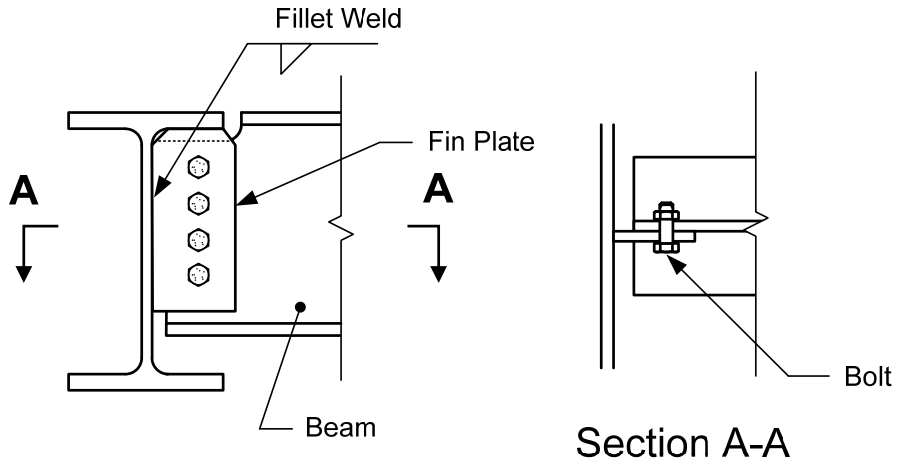
Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2–15. Schematic drawing of a header connection (Hn).**



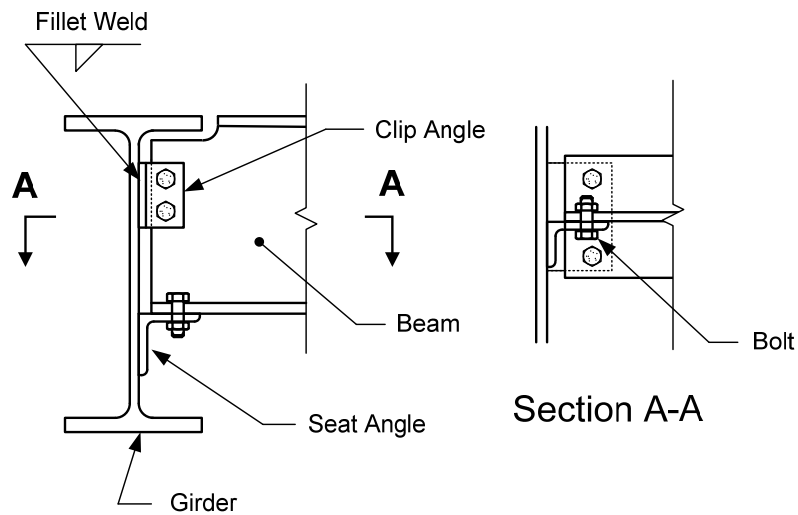
Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2–16. Schematic drawing of a knife connection (Kn).**



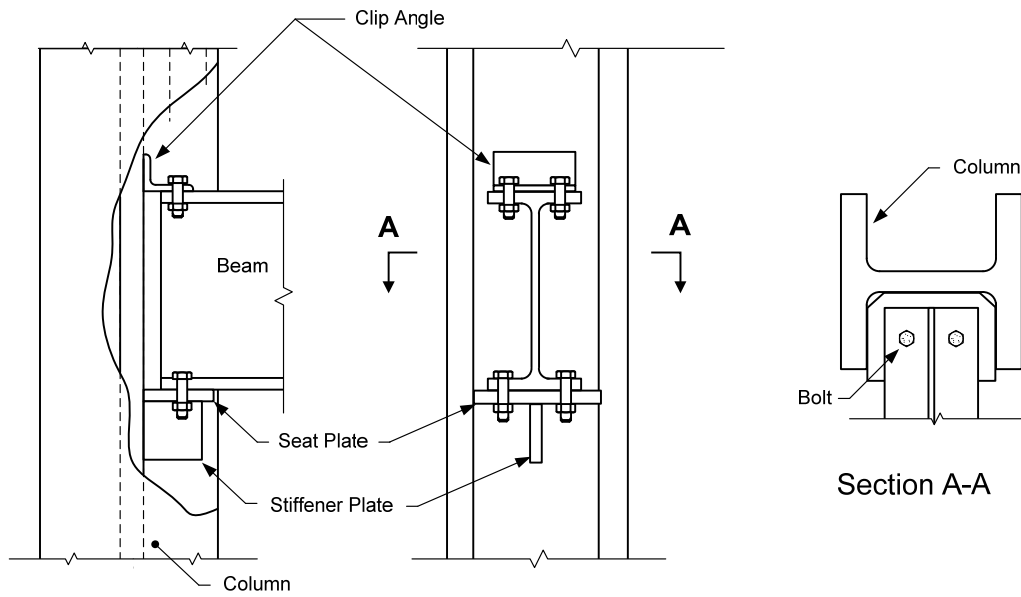
Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2–17. Schematic drawing of a fin plate connection (Fn).**



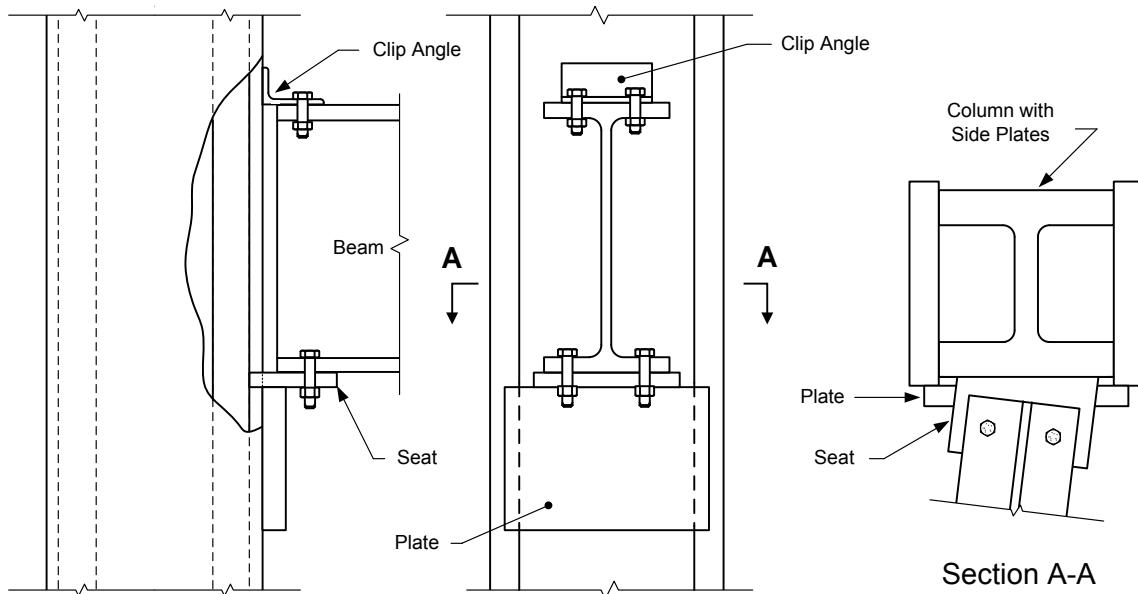
Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2–18. Schematic drawing of a seated connection with web clip (SWC).**



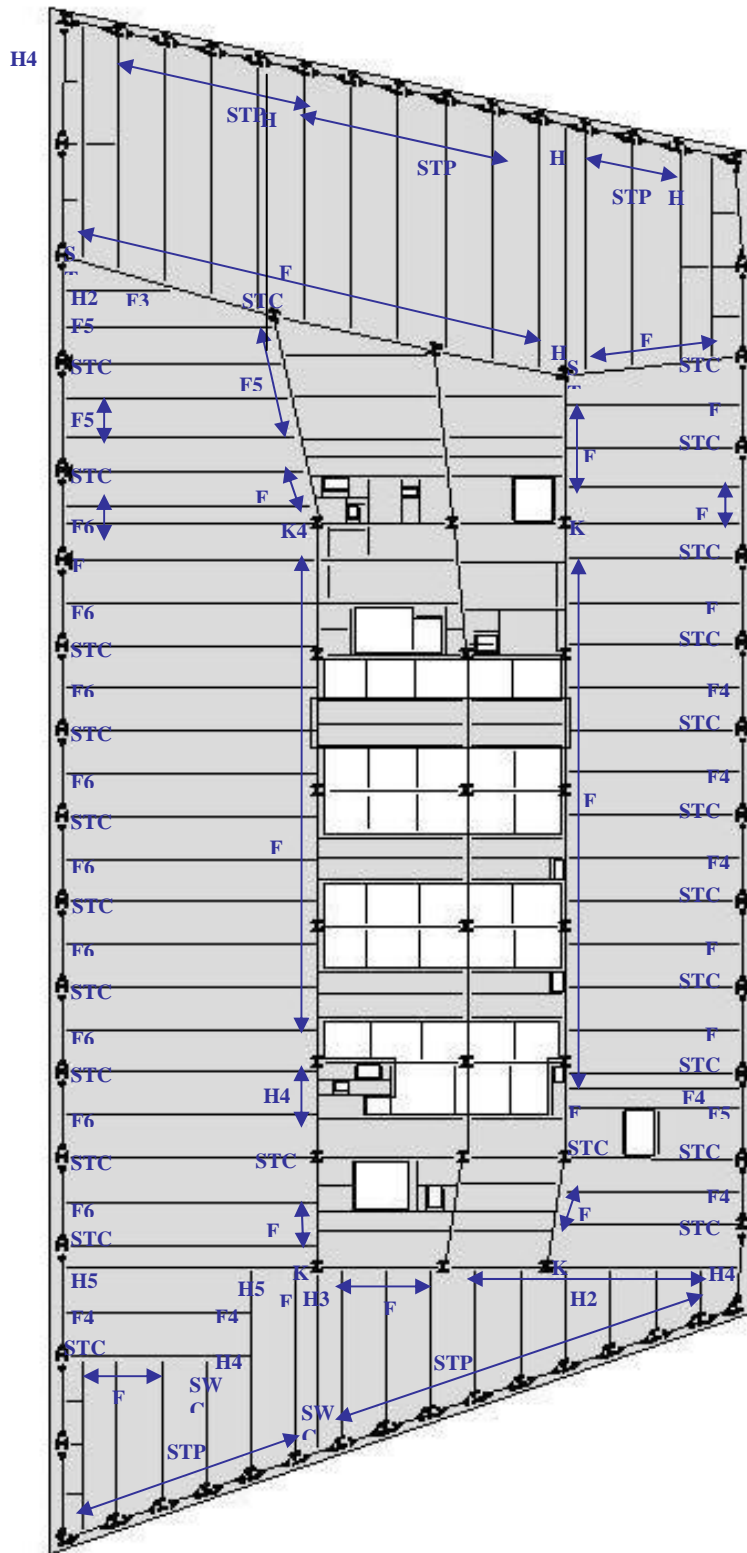
Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2–19. Schematic drawing of a seated connection with top clip (STC).**



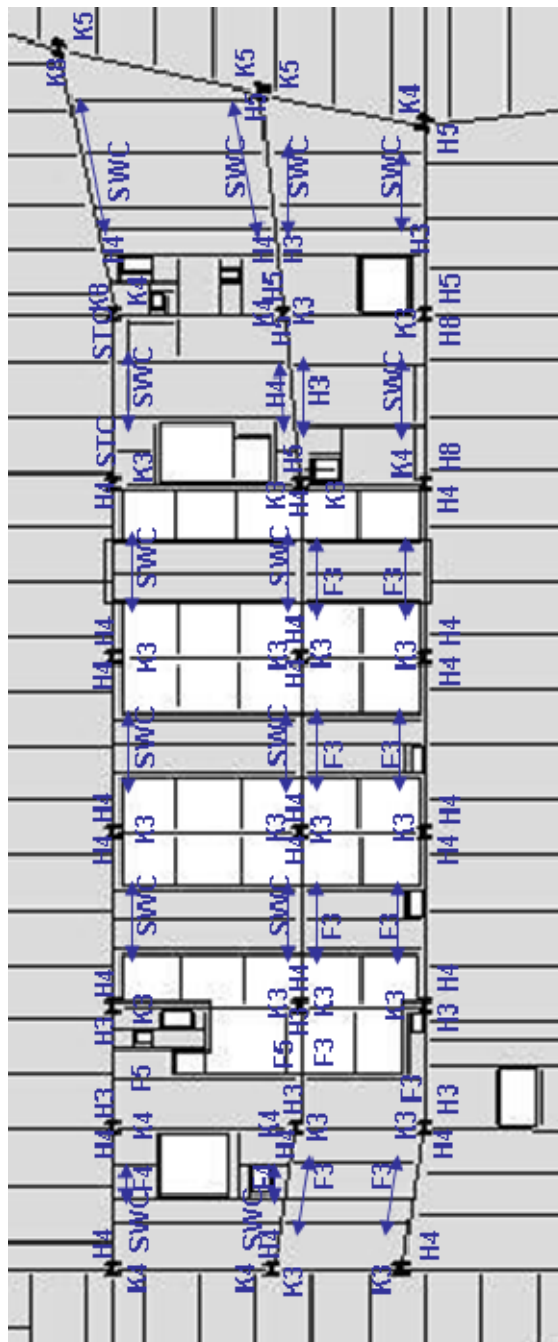
Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2–20. Schematic drawing of the seated connection at Column 79.**



Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2–21. Typical tenant floor framing connections.**



Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985)

**Figure 2-22. Typical core floor framing connections.**

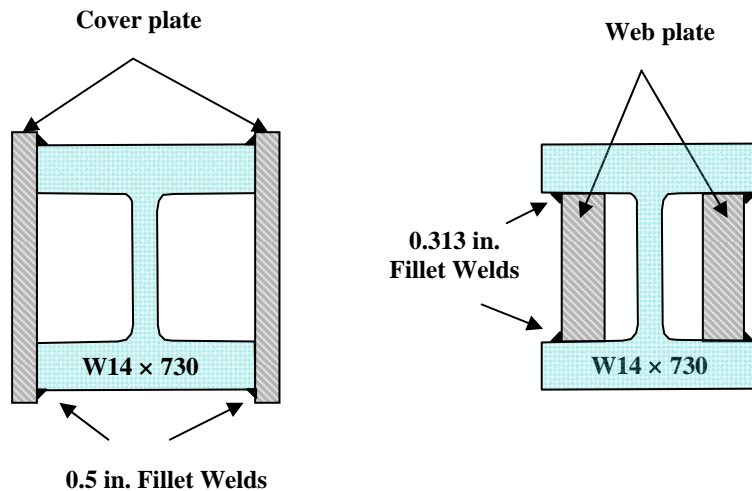
#### 2.4.4 Columns

The interior columns were primarily rolled wide-flange shapes of Grade 36 or 50 steel. As the loads increased toward the base of the building, many of the column sizes were increased through the use of built-up shapes. Built-up columns had a W14x730 core with cover plates welded to the flanges (to form a box), or web plates welded between the flanges, as shown in Figure 2-23. The plate welds were specified



to be continuous 0.5 in. fillet welds at the cover plates and 0.313 in. (minimum) fillet welds at the web plates. Plate thickness ranged from 1.5 in. to 8 in. Plate thickness  $t$  (in.) and steel grade were specified as follows:

$2 < t < 4$	ASTM A588 Grade 50
$4 < t < 6$	ASTM A572 Grade 42
$t > 6$	ASTM A588 Grade 42



**Figure 2-23.**  
Typical built-up  
column details.

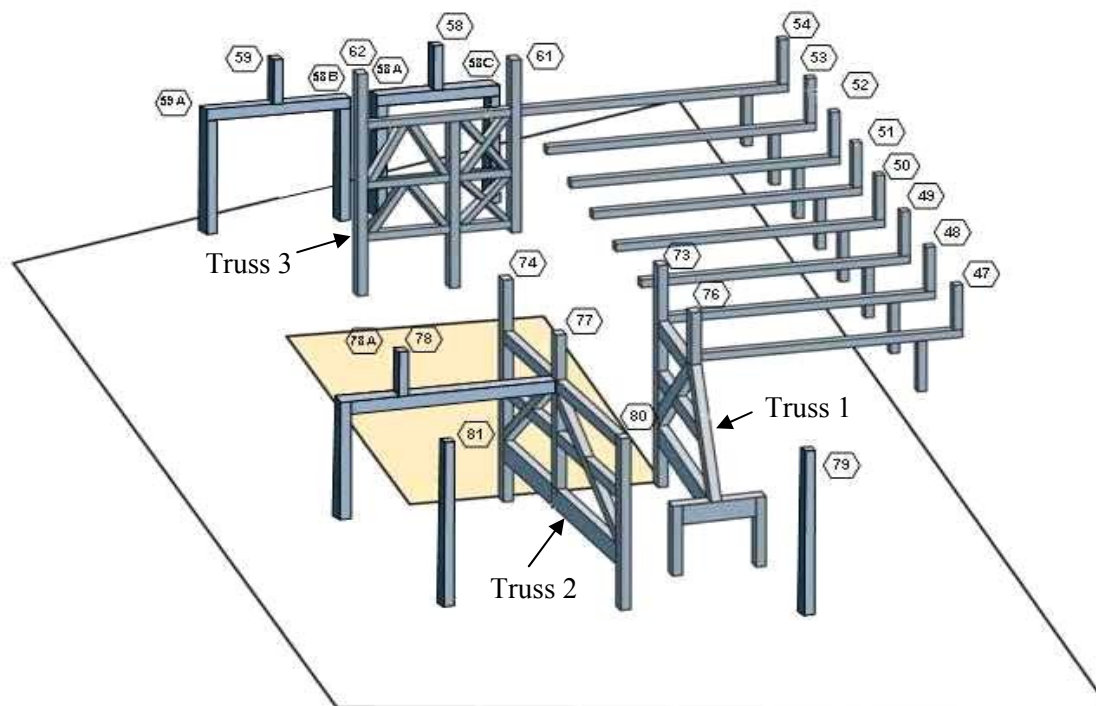
Typical core column splices had milled ends and splice plates were welded or bolted to the outside of the column web and flanges. Built-up columns were also milled at their bearing ends but the splice plates were fillet welded to the cover plate or web plate.

Exterior columns were nominally 14 in. W shapes (W14) of ASTM A36 steel. Exterior column splices were similar to the core column splices.

#### 2.4.5 Column Transfer Trusses and Girders

The layout of the foundation substructure and Con Edison columns did not align with the column layout in the upper portion of WTC 7. Therefore, a series of column transfers were constructed. These transfers occurred primarily between Floors 5 and 7. See Figure 2-24 for a schematic rendering of the transfers.

Columns 47 through 54, at the north facade, were transferred at Floor 7 by cantilever girders to bring them in line with the substation columns, which were offset 6 ft 9 in. to the south. The cantilever girders spanned an additional 46 ft, where they were supported by the north side core columns. The easternmost cantilever girder was connected to Truss 1, and the westernmost cantilever girder was connected to Truss 3 (Figure 2-24).



Source: McAllister 2002

**Figure 2–24. 3D schematic view of transfer trusses and girders between Floors 5 and 7.**

Column 76 was supported at Floor 7 by Truss 1. The west side of Truss 1 was supported by Column 73, while the east side was supported by a transfer girder running north-south which was, in turn, supported by Columns E3 and E4 at Floor 5.

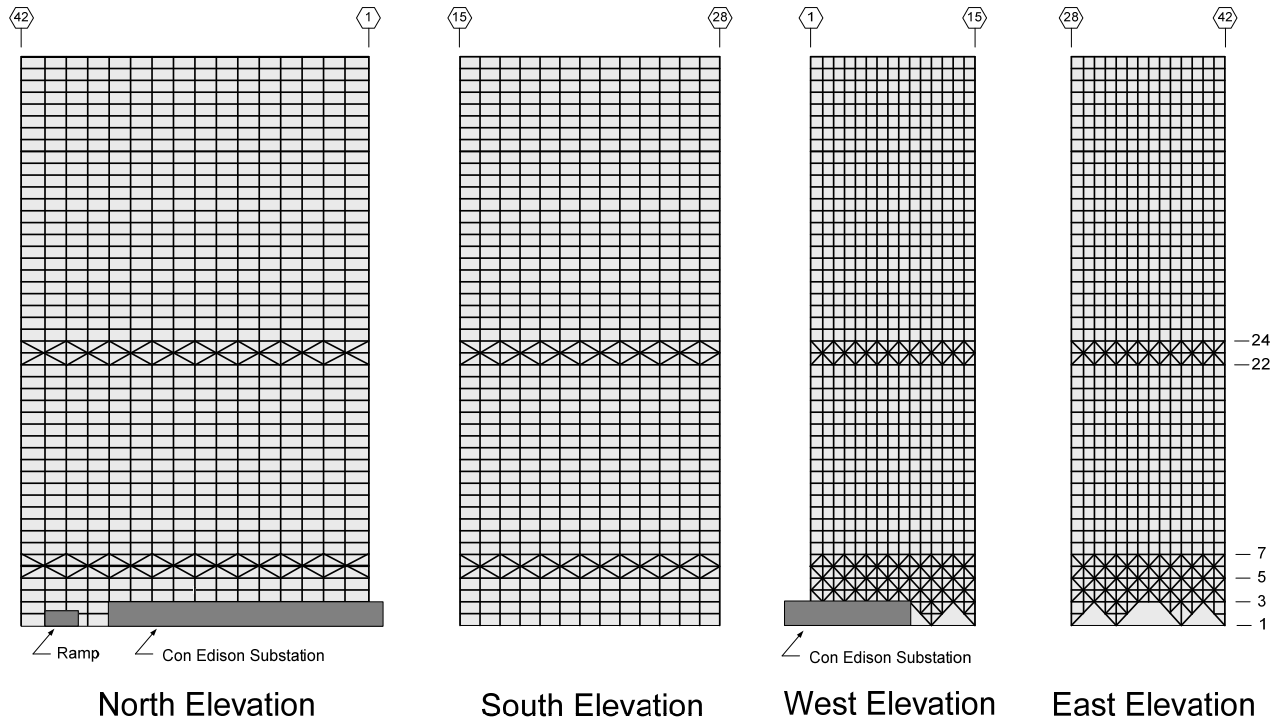
Columns 58, 59, and 78 were transferred by simply supported girders at Floor 7. The transfer girder supporting Column 78 was supported at its north end by truss 2. Column 77 was also supported by Truss 2. Truss 2 was supported by Column 74 at its west end and by Column 80 at its east end.

Column 61 was supported by Truss 3. Truss 3 ran north-south and was supported by Columns 62 and 61A. Truss 3 had a 10 ft cantilever span between Column 61 and Column 61A and an 18 ft back span to Column 62.

#### 2.4.6 Lateral System

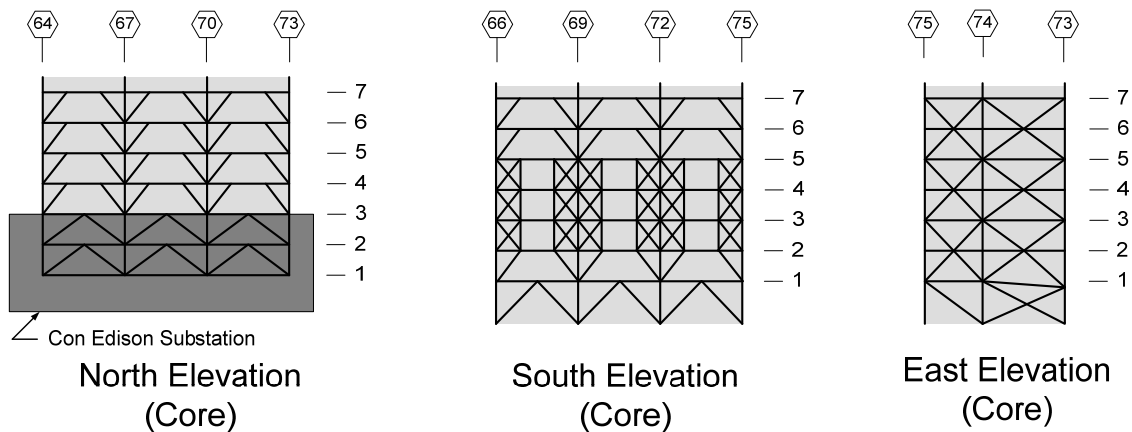
Above Floor 7, WTC 7 had an exterior moment frame. Exterior columns were typically rolled W14 shapes of ASTM A36 grade steel. Column trees were fabricated for the east and west facades with bolted field splices at the spandrel beam midspans. On the north and south facades, the spandrel beams had bolted flange and web connections.

At Floors 5 to 7 and Floors 22 to 24, there was a perimeter belt truss, shown in Figure 2–25. Below Floor 7 there was a combination of moment and braced frames around the exterior, and a series of braced frames in the core, as shown in Figure 2–26. The reinforced diaphragms of Floors 5 and 7 transferred in-plane loads from the exterior to the core. Above the loading dock at the south facade, two of the columns hung from the belt truss at Floors 5 through 7. Above the Con Edison vault at the north facade, eight columns also hung from the belt truss between Floors 5 and 7.



Based on erection drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985a)

**Figure 2–25. Exterior lateral system elevations.**



Based on erection drawings (Frankel Steel Limited 1985a)

**Figure 2–26. Core lateral system.**

## 2.5 PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION

A detailed discussion of fire protection provisions for WTC 7, including relevant codes and standards, were provided in NIST NCSTAR 1-1. This section describes the sprayed fire-resistive materials (SFRM) applied to the structural system.

### 2.5.1 Fire Resistance Requirements<sup>2</sup>

Fire resistance requirements in the building codes are greatest for structural members that are essential to the stability of the building as a whole. These include columns and other major gravity load carrying members that connect directly to columns such as girders and trusses. For various construction classes, the building codes specify different fire resistance ratings. The building codes reviewed all specify fire resistance ratings for high-rise office occupancies as follows:

- Type 1A
  - Columns: 4 h (supporting more than one floor)
  - Beams: 3 h (floor construction)
- Type 1B
  - Columns: 3 h (supporting more than one floor)
  - Beams: 2 h (floor construction)
- Type 1C (for sprinklered buildings only)
  - Columns: 2 h (supporting more than one floor)
  - Beams: 1½ h (floor construction)

The choice among permitted construction classes for a particular building is made by the architect and/or the owner. Thus, an unsprinklered high-rise office building that was designed according to the 1968 version of the NYC Building Code could follow either Type 1A or 1B. If designed subsequent to the passage of Local Law 16 (effective in 1984), a high-rise office building would have to be sprinklered and could follow Type 1C as a minimum classification. Similar reductions in the minimum required fire resistance ratings for sprinklered buildings were found in all model building codes over this period, as requirements for fire sprinklers, especially in high-rise buildings, had become common.

The 1968 NYCBC, Section C26-501.1 required that,

“Samples of all materials or assemblies required by this code to have a fire-resistance rating, ... shall be tested under the applicable test procedures specified herein ... . The fire-resistance rating of materials and assemblies listed in reference standard RS 5-1 [which references ASTM E 119] may be used to determine conformance with the fire resistance requirements of this code.”

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<sup>2</sup> The material in this section is from NIST NCSTAR 1-1, Section 9.1.3. It is repeated here for the reader’s convenience.

In traditional practice, the architect (sometimes different from the design architect, called the code architect or architect of record) specifies the fire resistance ratings needed to comply with the building code. The required ratings are normally not shown on the architectural drawings (although the construction type may be); rather, they are shown in the supporting material submitted to the building department for plans review.

Building codes require that the fire resistance rating of building elements be determined in accordance with test procedures set forth in ASTM E 119 (ASTM 2007) or by alternate approved procedures. In some cases the architect may choose to use an assembly that has already been tested and rated. Such assemblies are listed by testing laboratories in directories, databases accessed on test laboratory web sites, or in test reports available from manufacturers of materials used in the assemblies such as the producers of SFRM products. These sources are very detailed and indicate the thickness of the specific product tested that is required to achieve a specific hourly rating.

An additional variable that affects the needed thickness of SFRM is whether the assembly is thermally restrained (see ASTM 2007, Appendix X.3 Guide for Determining Conditions of Restraint for Floor and Roof Assemblies and for Individual Beams). It is traditionally assumed that an assembly that is thermally restrained requires less SFRM. Note that the NIST tests of the floor assemblies used in the WTC towers showed the opposite (NIST NCSTAR 1-6B). However, the determination of whether a floor system should be considered thermally restrained or not is not trivial and needs to be specified by the structural engineer.

In some cases, it is not clear who actually determines the required thickness of SFRM material. If the bid specifications for the fireproofing contract simply require the assemblies to be sprayed to achieve a specific hourly rating (which may be the case where a specific product is not identified to be used), then the thickness determination may be left to the fireproofing contractor.

The UL guide information includes a number of limitations on the application of listed assemblies, including:

- Limits on the size (flange width and web depth, pipe outer diameter) without the use of a mechanical break such as metal lath or fasteners,
- Use of bonding agents or conduct of a bond strength test in accordance with ASTM E 736 whenever the steel is painted (other than a paint specified in the listing),
- Conduct of thickness testing in accordance with ASTM E 605 (ASTM 2006).

Local Law 55 (1976) amended the 1968 NYC Building Code to require that all required, sprayed fire-resistive material on structural members, except those encased in concrete, be subjected to a controlled inspection, meaning that the inspection must be conducted under the supervision of a building inspector or a licensed design professional who assumes responsibility for compliance. This provision applied to all installations after the date of enactment (November 1, 1976) and was not retroactive. The inspection included verification of the thickness of the material, its density, and its adhesion, as described in the applicable ASTM Standard E 605. Currently, there are no code requirements, or general practices, for inspection of sprayed fire-resistive material over the life of a building. Most building codes contain a

requirement that sprayed fire-resistive material that is installed in areas where it is subject to mechanical damage shall be protected and maintained in a serviceable condition.

## 2.5.2 Thermal Insulation Material for WTC 7

Monokote MK-5 was the SFRM product applied to the structural steel framing and metal deck (see NIST NCSTAR 1-6A, Chapter 6). Monokote MK-5 was a gypsum-based SFRM containing vermiculite aggregate that was manufactured by W.R. Grace and Co. (Cambridge, Massachusetts). W.R. Grace ceased production of Monokote MK-5 in the 1980s.

Instructions to bidders<sup>3</sup> for applying the sprayed fire-resistive materials for WTC 7 listed the required fire resistance ratings, as well as the following criteria:

- 3 h rating for columns, pickups, girders, trusses, and all other steel framing supporting 2 or more floors.
- 2 h rating for fluted steel decking and all floor support structural steel.
- Sprayed-on fireproofing shall be of cementitious type or other asbestos free material of approved type. Monokote as produced by the Zonolite Construction Products Division of W.R. Grace is approved for use.
- Steel to which sprayed-on fireproofing will be applied will be unpainted.
- The size of the structural steel and the rating shall determine the thickness of the SFRM.
- The “Design Information Section” of the Underwriter’s Laboratories “Fire Resistance Index” dated January 1975, and any later revisions and the “Guide for Determining Conditions of Restraint ...” including Appendix C from standard UL 263, shall form the basis of all the required work.
- After application, spray-on fireproofing material will be tested by an independent testing agency, retained and paid for by the Owner.

The contract for applying SFRM to WTC 7 was awarded to E. Patti & Sons in February 1985. The SFRM product selected by E. Patti & Sons was MK-5<sup>4</sup>. Internal correspondence from W.R. Grace, dated April 29, 1986<sup>5</sup>, which documented a site visit and discussion with E. Patti & Sons, stated that 7/16 in. of MK-5 was being applied to the floor beams, and 3/8 in. was being applied to the metal decks.

The UL fire resistance ratings used to determine the appropriate SFRM thickness to apply to the columns, floor beams, and metal deck was BXUV.D739. Table 2-1 lists SFRM thicknesses for the structural components in WTC 7.

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<sup>3</sup> Instructions to Bidders for Sprayed-on SFRM for WTC 7, Emery Roth & Sons, November 9, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Grace Construction Products Division to Tishman Construction Corporation, dated January 14, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Grace Construction Products Division Internal Memorandum, dated April 29, 1986.

**Table 2-1. UL Fire Resistance Directory ratings for columns and composite floors (1985).**

	Reference	Rating	Thickness (in.)	Notes
Composite Floor Beams Deck	BXUV.D739	2 h	1/2 3/8	For W8x28 steel beams or larger, a normal weight concrete slab, and MK-5 SFRM.
Column	BXUV.X704	3 h	7/8	For W14x228 steel columns or larger.

The SFRM application was inspected by Testwell Craig Laboratories, Inc. NIST obtained a set of Inspection Reports<sup>6</sup> with SFRM thickness measurements for the columns, floor beams, and metal deck showing measurement data taken at Floors 3 through 12, 32 through 40, and 42 through 47. The inspection reports include plan views of the WTC 7 floors indicating where measurements were taken. SFRM thicknesses were listed in the Inspection Reports and were presumably intended for the inspectors who were determining minimum allowable SFRM thicknesses.

The measurements gave the statistics shown in Table 2-2. The column measurements were based on data listed for Floors 3 to 12 and 32 to 40 because the columns at Floors 42 to 47 were smaller than the W14x228 minimum column size. The metal deck measurements used only the data associated with the 3/8 in. SFRM thickness.

**Table 2-2. Measurements of SFRM thickness on steel columns, floor beams, and metal decks in WTC 7.**

	Specified Thickness (in.)	Data Points	Average (in.)	Standard Deviation (in.)	COV	Minimum (in.)	Maximum (in.)
Column	0.875	51	0.955	0.155	0.162	0.85	2.0
Floor Beams	0.5	82	0.534	0.054	0.101	0.4	0.775
Metal Deck	0.375	63	0.416	0.033	0.079	0.375	0.5

NIST required SFRM thicknesses for the thermal finite element analyses of Floors 7 to 14, where uncontrolled fires burned until the building collapsed. The thermal analyses used the gas temperatures from the FDS analyses, which modeled the growth and spread of the fires on Floors 7, 8, and 9, and 11, 12, and 13. The gas temperatures were applied to the surface of the SFRM coating to determine temperature histories for the steel framing and concrete slab.

Based on the available information on fire resistance rating and applied SFRM thicknesses, the lack of gaps in the applied SFRM, and the relatively smooth surface of applied MK-5 to the steel beams and columns, the specified SFRM thicknesses (Column 2 in Table 2-2) were selected for thermal analyses. For the thermal analyses, NIST used the following uniform thicknesses for the columns, floor beams, and metal deck:

- 7/8 in. of MK-5 on columns
- 7/16 in. of MK-5 on floor beams

<sup>6</sup> Inspection Reports prepared by Testwell Craig Laboratories Inc. for Silverstein Development Corporation, 7 World Trade Center, dated from January 1986 to November 1986.

- 3/8 in. of MK-5 on metal deck

A 7/16 in. thickness was used in the thermal analyses for the floor beams, based on correspondence from W.R. Grace that indicated this thickness was being applied by the contractor. It was later determined that the thickness that was to be applied was 1/2 in., rather than 7/16 in. This difference has little, if any, effect on the heating of the floor beams, as shown in Section 11.4.1.

### 2.5.3 SFRM Condition on September 11, 2001

#### As Applied

The review of available documents and witness accounts indicated that the condition of the SFRM in WTC 7 prior to the events of September 11, 2001, was adequate and well-maintained. The photographs in Figure 2–27 through Figure 2–29 show the condition of the SFRM on Floors 5, 33, and 36 during renovations in 1989. Review of similar photos showed SFRM removal in selected areas for construction purposes, but the general condition of the SFRM in the photos reviewed was adequate, with an even application and no visible gaps.



**Figure 2–27.**  
**Photograph of**  
**Floor 5 during**  
**renovations**  
**showing SFRM on**  
**steel beams and**  
**metal deck, dated**  
**08/30/89.**





**Figure 2–28.** Photograph of Floor 33 during renovations showing SFRM on steel beams and metal deck, dated 03/30/89.



**Figure 2–29.** Photograph of Floor 36 during renovations, showing SFRM on steel beams and metal deck, looking dated 06/30/89.

## After Debris Impact

After the dust and smoke cleared following the collapse of WTC 1, damage to WTC 7 was observed primarily on the south face near the southwest corner, between Floors 5 to 17 (Section 5.5). Seven exterior columns were severed (six columns on the south face and one column on the west face). The interior damage was not visible but, based on engineering judgment and interview accounts by individuals that were in or around WTC 7, estimates of interior structural damage between the exterior walls and the core were made. Chapter 5 describes the damage observed from photos and videos, and the structural damage in the southwest region is summarized in Section 5.5.3.

The WTC 7 structural damage resulted from debris falling from WTC 1. In a similar fashion, the building located at 130 Liberty Street (referred to as Deutsche Bank or the Bankers Trust building), was damaged by falling exterior panels from WTC 2 as it collapsed. NIST was granted access to inspect floors where damage occurred in the building on 130 Liberty Street on August 21 and 22, 2006. The debris from WTC 2 had penetrated the north face of the 130 Liberty Street building and caused damage to Floors 9 through 22, as shown in Figure 2–30 and Figure 2–31. The north face had severed spandrel beams between exterior columns, with the damage extending into the interior that grew in magnitude as the debris fell. Figure 2–31 shows that the floor beams framing into intact exterior columns remained in place, but the SFRM in the immediate vicinity of the damage was knocked off.

Figure 2–32 shows the extent of the damage that was documented by the FEMA WTC Building Performance Study (McAllister 2002). Immediately after the damage was incurred, the ceilings and column enclosures were still in place, so possible SFRM damage in other parts of the building could not be observed.



NIST photograph 2006.

**Figure 2–30. Exterior view of damage to the north face of 130 Liberty Street by debris falling from WTC 2.**

Figure 2–33 shows a typical floor plan with the column line numbering that was used to indicate the locations that were examined. SFRM had been applied to all columns, floor beams, and steel deck observed. The floor beams and steel decks appeared to have had a uniform coating of approximately  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (visual estimate), as shown in Figure 2–34. The location of the photograph was near F2 on Floor 16. The columns appeared to have had heavier coatings that ranged from approximately 1 inch to several inches (visual estimate). Figure 2–35 was taken at location B6 on Floor 16. In the photograph, the column coatings tended to be thicker at the flange tips. Primer was observed on floor beams and columns in some areas with missing SFRM.



NIST photograph 2006

**Figure 2–31. Interior view of damage to the north face of 130 Liberty Street by debris falling from WTC 2.**

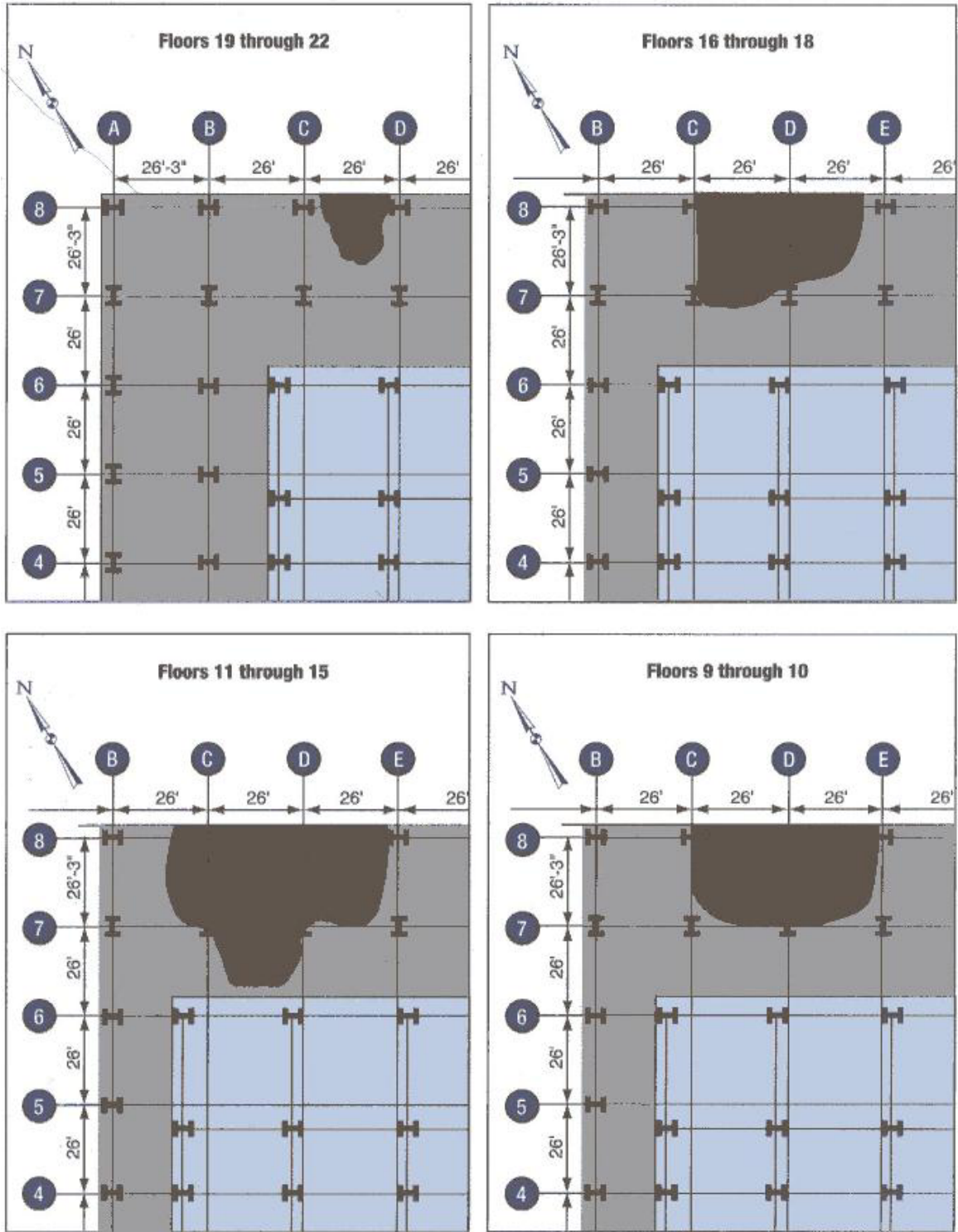
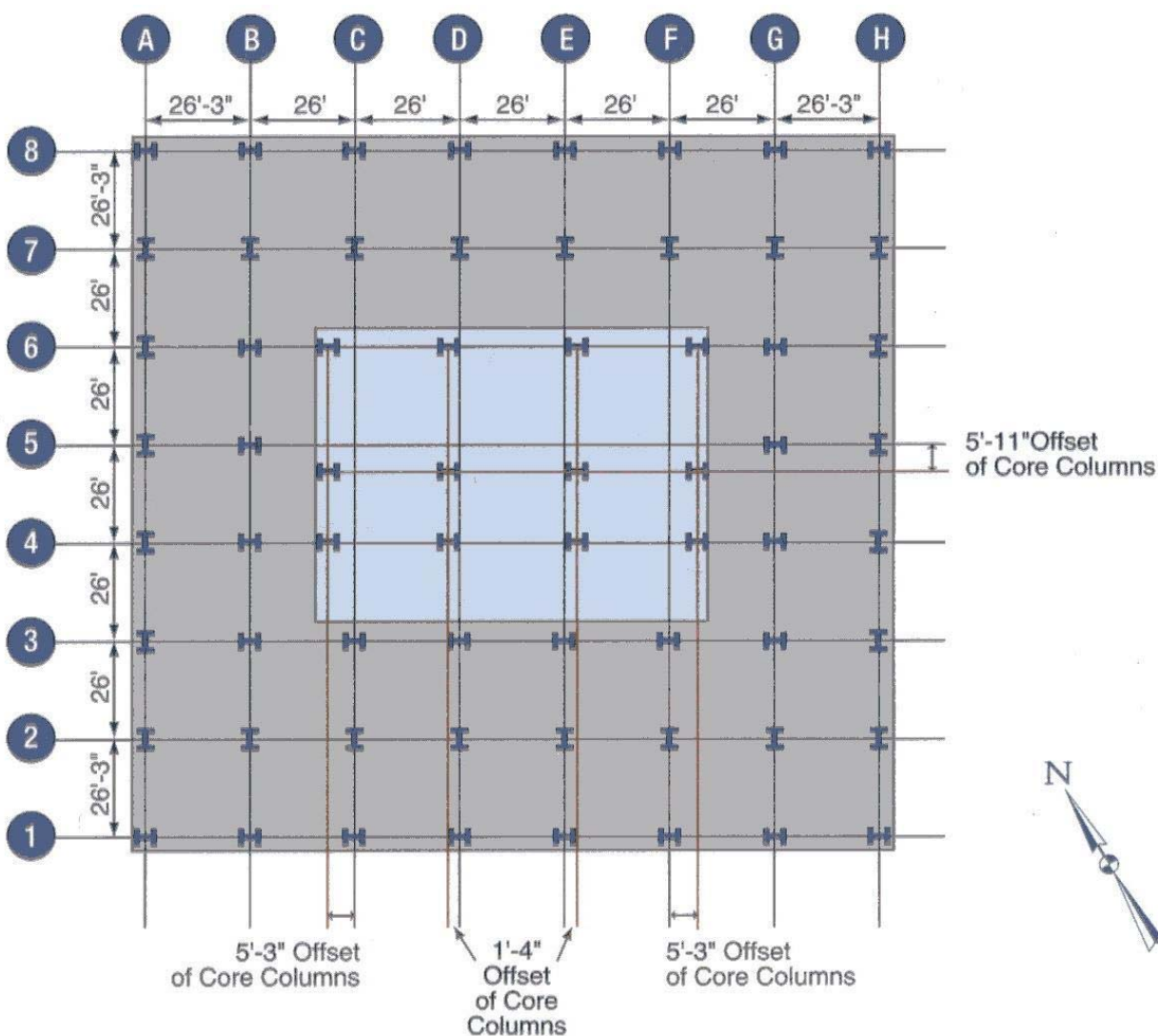


Figure 6-5 Approximate zones of damage – 19th through 22nd floors, 16th through 18th floors, 11th through 15th floors, and 9th through 10th floors.

Source: McAllister 2002

Figure 2–32. Damaged areas from debris impact on the north face of the building at 130 Liberty Street.



Source: McAllister 2002

**Figure 2-33. Typical floor plan for the building at 130 Liberty Street.**

The appearance of the SFRM was consistent with that of a cementitious product, such as a Monokote product. Grace Monokote products MK-4 and MK-5 were introduced to the marketplace in 1973. The building construction was completed in 1974 (<http://www.wirednewyork.com/wtc/130liberty>).



**Figure 2–34.**  
Floor beams  
with intact  
SFRM.

NIST photograph 2006



**Figure 2–35.**  
Column with  
removed SFRM  
and intact  
primer.

NIST photograph 2006

In general, the SFRM was observed to be intact a few feet away from the area of structural damage. In some locations, SFRM had been removed and sampled for tests of contaminants in the building (e.g., square shape of removed area). There were also some areas where SFRM was missing from the bottom surface of the lower flanges of floor beams. It was not always clear whether the SFRM had fallen off due to an event unrelated to the sampling or if it had been knocked off while samples were being taken.

Based on these observations, NIST determined that there was no basis for assuming SFRM damage in WTC 7 caused by the debris impact, except in the immediate vicinity of the damage.

## 2.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Review of the building codes, standards and information on the SFRM resulted in the following findings:

- The average thickness of the MK-5 SFRM on the columns, based on data available from Testwell Craig Inspection Laboratories Inc., was greater than 7/8 in.
- An MK-5 SFRM thickness of 7/8 in. is consistent with a 3 h rating for the columns, according to UL BXUV.X704, and a Type 1-B classification (unsprinklered) for the building.
- Correspondence showed that the SFRM contractor, E. Patti & Sons, planned to apply 7/16 in. of MK-5 SFRM to the floor beams and 3/8 in. of MK-5 SFRM to the metal deck.
- An MK-5 SFRM thickness of 1/2 in. on the floor beams and of 3/8 in. on the metal deck is consistent with a 2 h rating, according to UL BXUV.D739.
- The average MK-5 SFRM thickness measurement on the floor beams and metal deck, based on data available from Testwell Craig Inspection Laboratories Inc., was greater than 1/2 in. for the beams and 3/8 in. for the metal deck.
- The NIST survey of the 130 Liberty Street building, damaged by debris impact from the collapse of WTC 2, indicated that the cementitious SFRM was not knocked off by the falling debris, except in the immediate area of damage. For analysis purposes, NIST therefore assumed that the similar SFRM was in place in WTC 7 after the impact of debris from WTC 1, which was a conservative assumption.

## 2.7 REFERENCES

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## Chapter 3

# BUILDING INTERIOR AND COMBUSTIBLES

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The fires in WTC 7 were initiated following debris damage from the collapse of WTC 1 (Chapter 5). The specific ignition process is not known, e.g., whether from flaming brands, electrical shorts, etc. The fires were fed by the furnishings, interior finish, and other combustibles within the building. Descriptions of the simulation of the fires and the resulting heating of the structure are presented in Chapters 9 and 10, respectively. As input to those simulations, this chapter documents the layout of the floors of interest and the combustibles that might have contributed to the fires.

### 3.2 FOCUS

In gathering information regarding the layout and furnishing of WTC 7, the Investigation Team focused its attention on the 5<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> floors:

- As will be seen in Chapter 5, there were sustained, though not always concurrent, visible fires only on floors 7 through 9 and 11 through 13. There might have been fires on Floors 5 or 6 that were not visible (see below). An analysis of possible fires on these floors appears in Chapter 9.
- Above Floor 13, fires were observed on floors 19, 22, 29 and 30, and these occurred early (i.e., were not observed for 3 hours prior to collapse) and were smaller and of shorter duration than those on the lower floors. Late in the afternoon, a small fire was observed briefly on Floor 14, which was vacant. Floors 15 and above were furnished office spaces.

The information NIST needed regarding the interiors of each of these nine floors was similar to the information needed for the reconstruction of the fires in the WTC towers:

- The nature and location of the interior walls. The interior walls could have acted as fire barriers, delaying the fire progression and subsequent exposure of structural components to the intense heat from the fires. The interior walls of perimeter offices or conference rooms could also have prevented photographs from recording fires in the building interior and kept flames and smoke from billowing out the windows.
- The nature of the ceiling tile systems. The ceiling tile system could have provided a (modest) time delay for access of the hot fire plume to the bottom of the floor structure above (Chapter 9). Smoke could also spread throughout the entire ceiling space, possibly emerging in remote locations and thus giving false impressions of the fire location.
- The nature and locations of any stairwells, elevators, shafts, or other passages between floors. Such passages could have provided a means for floor-to-floor fire spread.

- The general nature and mass of the office furnishings and any unusual combustibles (e.g., high density file storage areas or significant quantities of highly flammable items). This is discussed further in Section 3.4.

### 3.3 FLOOR PLANS AND COMBUSTIBLES

#### 3.3.1 General

Silverstein Properties (SP) managed WTC 7 from the date of first occupancy through the collapse on September 11, 2001. Their copies of the floor plans were lost in the collapse. NIST staff requested that the tenant companies and government agencies provide their most recent architectural drawings of their space, relative to the time of the collapse, as well as information regarding the furnishings. Staff of the occupying organizations and SP staff were also interviewed to gain additional insights into the layout, furnishing, and overall fuel load of Floors 5 through 13.

As shown in Table 3–1, NIST obtained floor plans for the nine focus floors. However, despite the quality of the drawings and verbal descriptions obtained by NIST, there was some uncertainty regarding the nature of some spaces. Notably, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and American Express occupied all but the east side of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, and NIST was unable to find people who recalled the nature of the unoccupied space.

**Table 3–1. Floor layout information obtained.**

Floor	Tenant	Material Received <sup>a</sup>	General Description of Tenant Layout
13	U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission/American Express	FP, V	Cubicles on southwest corner; meeting rooms on north face; storage room on northwest corner; east side unknown
11, 12	U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission	FP, V	Almost entirely walled offices. Library, file and supply rooms on west side of core on 12 <sup>th</sup> floor.
10	U.S. Secret Service	FP, V	Mostly walled offices around perimeter
9	U.S. Secret Service	FP, V	Mixture of walled offices and open landscaping
7, 8	American Express	FP, V	Mostly cubicles. Generator vaults on south side.
5, 6	Mechanical Space	FP	No tenants

a. Types of descriptive material received: FP: floor plan; V: verbal description of interior.

On Floors 5 through 13, the building core was approximately the same size and was bounded by demising walls. The demising walls were fire-rated walls constructed of gypsum board over steel studs and reached from the floor slab below to the floor slab above. Similar walls provided tenant-tenant separation on floors where there were or had been multiple tenants. The doors through these demising walls were fire-rated and had self or automatic closers. The 6<sup>th</sup> floor differed from the other floors in that the concrete floor slab did not cover the entire floor area, as described in Section 3.3.2.

Interior walls in the tenant spaces were also of gypsum board and steel stud construction, but generally extended from the floor slab to just above the drop ceiling. These walls, though unrated, also could have confined the fire for a short period of time. The space bounded by the upper concrete floor slab and the drop ceiling formed a plenum; for a tenant floor with a single tenant and no interior demising walls, the

plenum would have extended across the full area of a given floor. The hot upper layer generated by the fire effluent could then have spread floor-wide, unlike the (multiple tenant per floor) case with interior demising walls. There were some slab-to-slab walls surrounding sound-sensitive offices and conference rooms that could also have interrupted fire spread. Such walls were usually not fire-rated.

Doors within tenant spaces typically are not fire-rated and do not have self or automatic closers. For modeling purposes, NIST generally presumed these doors to have been open. However, in some cases, the observed interrupted progress of fire across a series of windows could have indicated a partitioned area with a closed door.

Within the tenant spaces on Floors 7 through 13, the floor slab was generally carpeted; there were some cases of slightly raised floors for power and data cabling and of wood- or stone-covered floor areas. There was little information regarding the drop ceiling systems, and NIST assumed that they were similar to those in the WTC towers and that they were intact outside the zone affected by debris impact from the collapse of WTC 1. There was no available information on the thermal properties of the ceiling tile systems on these floors. However, since the building was sprinklered, the ceilings were not fire rated, and NIST assumed that the thermal response of the ceiling systems was similar to those in the towers.

The Investigation Team digitized drawings of the focus floors (see below and Chapter 9), including the layout of the partitions, stairwells and other features that might affect fire spread. These were used as input to the fire simulations described in Chapter 9.

### 3.3.2 Floors 5 and 6

#### Layout

The 5<sup>th</sup> floor was a mechanical floor, 4.0 m (13.0 ft) in height from slab to slab.<sup>1</sup> As shown in Figure 3–1, along the west-to-east midsection of the floor were, in turn, a segment of the west stairwell, banks of elevators, the second building stairwell, and a two story mechanical space housing the ventilation and air conditioning equipment. Along the north and south faces were vaults housing power transformers for the building.

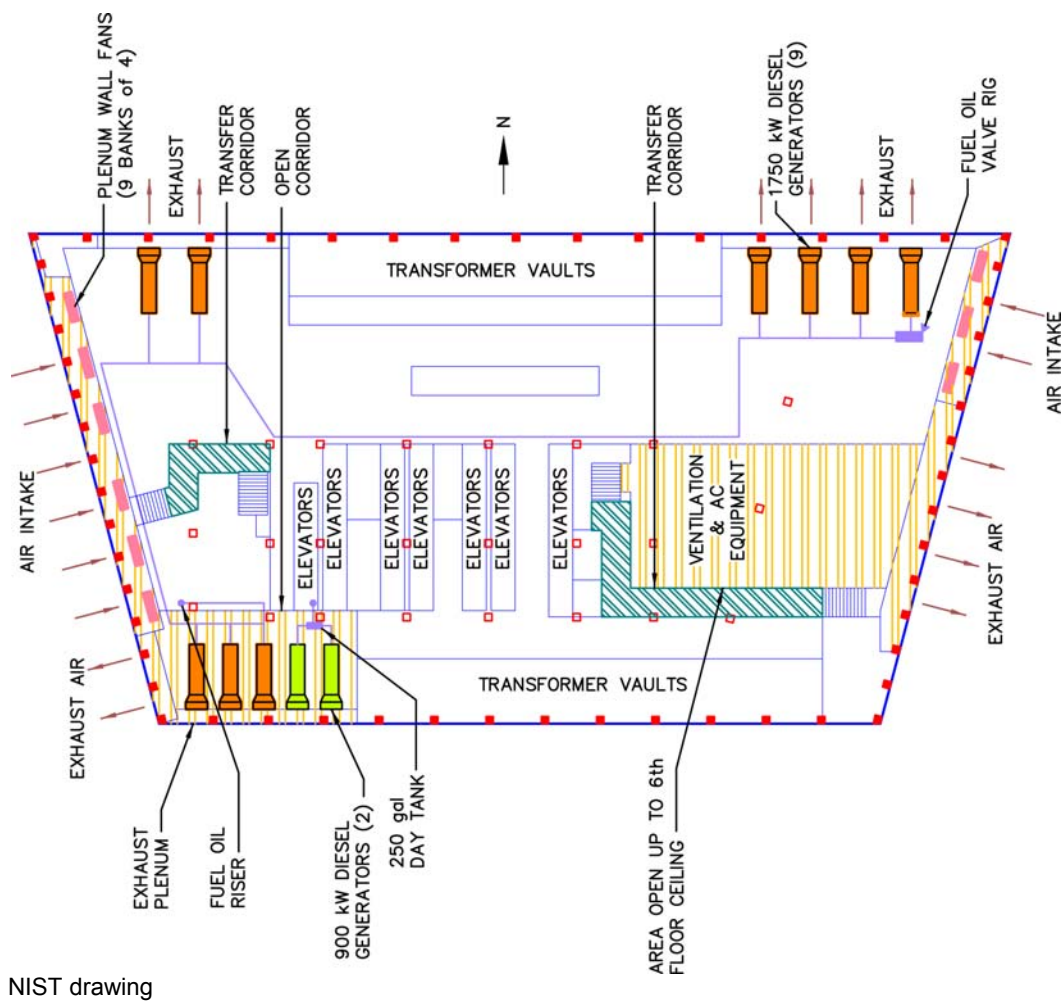
The emergency power for the building came from the two 900 kW diesel generators (indicated in green in Figure 3–1) located near the southwest corner of the floor. The vault surrounding the generators in this area was two stories tall. Added in 1994 were nine additional generators that provided emergency power to the Salomon Smith Barney spaces above Floor 14; these are shown in orange. A unified description of the fuel supply for the emergency generator system is presented in Section 3.4.

Two story aluminum plenums that provided air for the diesel engines were located along portions of the west and east walls. A building exhaust plenum was located on the west side of the southwest generator room and the south central portion of the east wall. The diesel engines were exhausted through plenums on the west side of the south wall and along the north wall where the diesel generators were

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<sup>1</sup> The description of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors was derived from architectural and mechanical equipment design drawings provided by Silverstein Properties. Some of the details may differ from the actual layout on September 11, 2001.

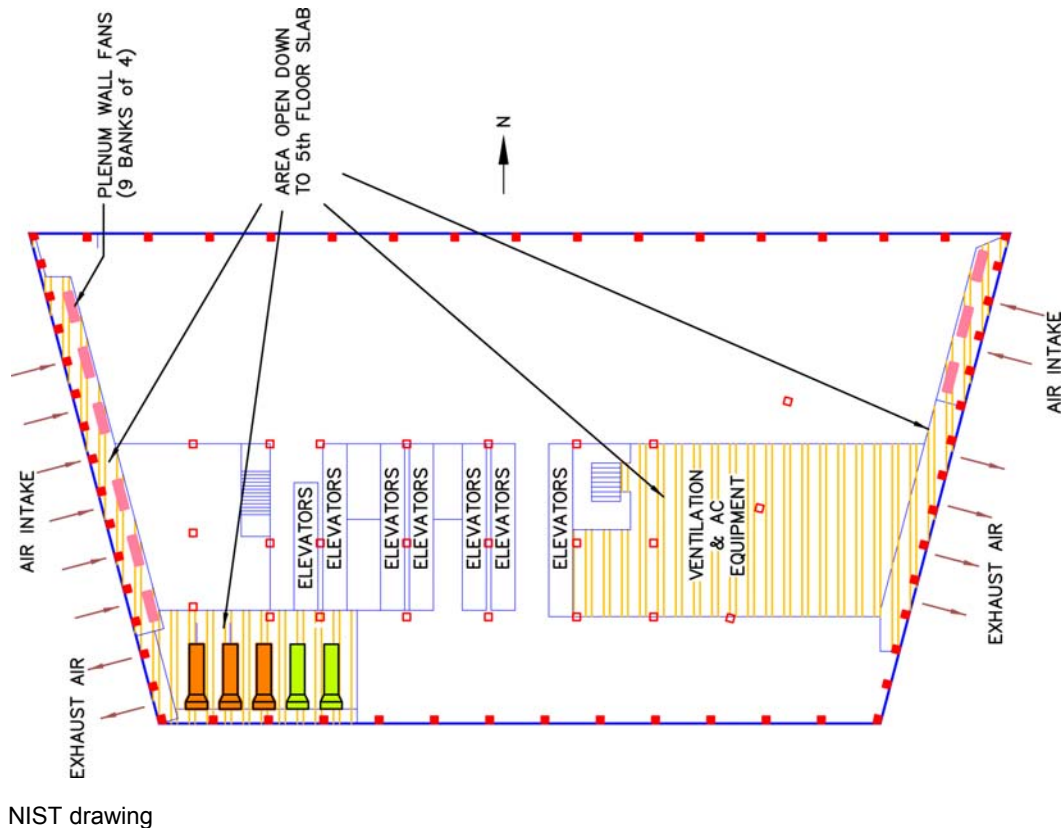
located. Thirty-six  $18 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$  ( $38,000 \text{ ft}^3/\text{min}$ ) fans provided intake air to the east and west plenums for emergency diesel engine combustion and generator cooling. The maximum air flow was  $645 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$  ( $1,368,000 \text{ ft}^3/\text{min}$ ).



**Figure 3–1. Schematic of Floor 5.**

The 6<sup>th</sup> floor (Figure 3–2) was also a mechanical floor, 4.0 m (13 ft) in height from slab to slab. It was isolated from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor by a floor slab, the walls of the two story mechanical space containing the air conditioning equipment, and the upward extension of the vault containing the southwest generators. Along the east and west walls were the upper parts of two story plenums. The space along the north side of the floor was crossed by deep transfer girders. Both the north and south sides of the floor contained ventilation ducts, plumbing, and miscellaneous electrical and mechanical equipment.

Aside from the fuel for the generators, NIST was unable to identify significant combustible material on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. There were no documented combustibles to sustain a fire on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, although Solomon Smith Barney staff reported that their janitorial supplies were stored there. For flames to burn in the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and heat structural members, the flames from a fire on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor would have had to penetrate one of the aluminum plenum walls, rise through a gap created by debris damage on the south side of the building, or collapse a portion of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor slab.



**Figure 3–2. Schematic of Floor 6.**

### The Facade

Aluminum louvers were installed along the exterior walls of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors to protect the mechanical floors from the weather. The louvers opened automatically when the fans were operating. From a distance, it was difficult to see if the louvers were opened or closed because there was an exterior mesh, where the windows were located, to keep debris out.

- On the east and south faces, the louvers, each about 6.7 m (22 ft) high and 1.4 m (4½ ft) wide, extended almost the combined height of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors.
- On the west face, louvers approximately 2.3 m (7½ ft) high by 2.0 m (6½ ft) wide were installed in 14 of the window frames on each of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. These louvers were the same shape and size as the windows on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor and above. The end windows on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors were wider, contained double panes, and were filled with a solid panel rather than louvers.

The louvers, the transformer vault walls, and the interior plenum walls would have blocked any view into the building interior from the east, south or west. However, if a large fire penetrated a plenum wall and if the louvers were open, flames might have been visible, and smoke might have emanated from the exhaust openings. NIST found no photographic records or eyewitness accounts of fires that could be observed through these faces of the building on these two floors.

On the north face, louvers were located in the window frames on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor and tinted glass windows were used on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor to match the appearance of the upper stories. The view of any interior fires on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor was blocked by the exhaust plenum walls at the east and west ends and by the bank of transformer vaults along the center of the north face. To become visible from the north, a 5<sup>th</sup> floor fire would have had to be of sufficient intensity to breach the transformer vault or the exhaust plenum. By contrast, a fire on the north side of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor would have been almost as visible (due to the tinted glass) as on one of the tenant floors. Since there was essentially no combustible material to support a significant fire on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, the flames from a significant fire on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor would have had to penetrate one of the aluminum plenum walls or collapse a portion of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor slab. In addition, if there were an underventilated fire on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, unburned pyrolysis products could have spread through such a gap and, if ignited, burned on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. NIST found no photographic records or eyewitness accounts of fires that could be observed through the north windows on these floors.

### 3.3.3 Floors 7 and 8

American Express moved into Floors 7 and 8 in 1994 and was the first tenant in that space. Their layouts, as of October 2000, are depicted in Figure 3–3 and Figure 3–4.<sup>2</sup> The flooring material was 46 cm (18 in.) square carpet tiles of unknown composition. The walls were painted, with some poster art. There was a limited amount of fluoropolymer-insulated fire alarm and security cabling above the drop ceiling tiles. Communications cabling ran through raceways in the floor slabs. There were some firestopped holes in the 8<sup>th</sup> floor slab for communication cables between the two floors.

The north side of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor was densely filled with clusters of cubicles and a few walled offices. On the east side of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor was a large data center, whose walls ran from slab to slab. A vault in the middle of the south side contained, among other equipment, three generators to provide emergency power for the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), located on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor. The vault also contained a 1.25 m<sup>3</sup> (275 gal) fuel tank for the generators. Approximately 650 m<sup>2</sup> (7,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) of space on the west side of the floor had been vacated (in exchange for space on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor) in 1997. Employees of the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management said that they were using the vacated space for storage. The people who had occupied the area between the west face and the building core had been moved to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, and the 7<sup>th</sup> floor space had been turned over to Silverstein Properties, which intended to use it for storage. There might have been little combustible material in this space.

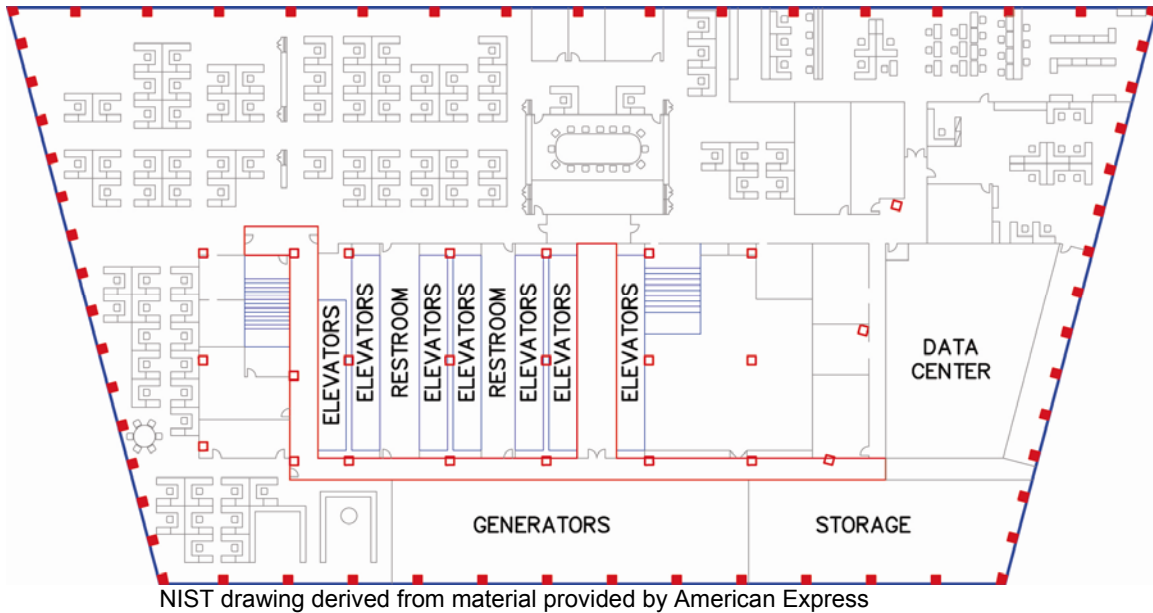
Virtually all the 8<sup>th</sup> floor was densely filled with clusters of cubicles. Along the west wall was a small vault containing a single emergency power generator and a 1.25 m<sup>3</sup> (275 gal) fuel tank. The vault walls ran slab to slab and were fire-rated.

American Express did not require employees to clear their desktops at the end of a workday. However, the offices were generally neat, as they did nightly sweeps to avoid clutter and for fire safety. Some of their material was stored in lateral file cabinets, and a lot of material was stored in a nearby building to maximize the availability of space for staff.

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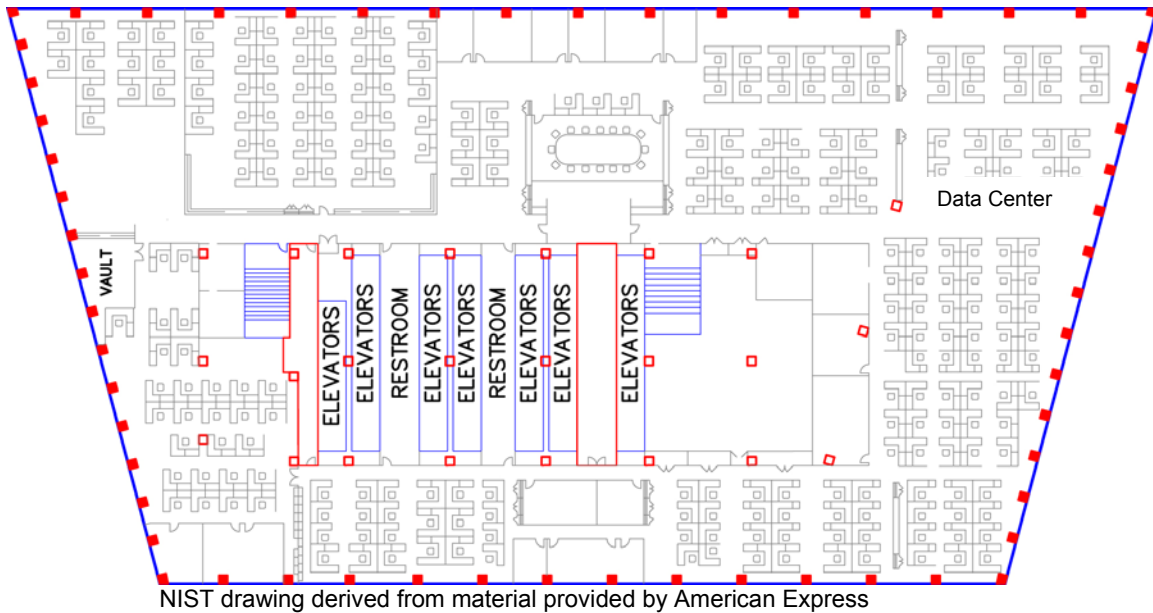
<sup>2</sup> Floor plans provided by American Express and supplemented by NIST interviews with American Express staff, April and May 2006.





NIST drawing derived from material provided by American Express

**Figure 3–3. Schematic of Floor 7.**



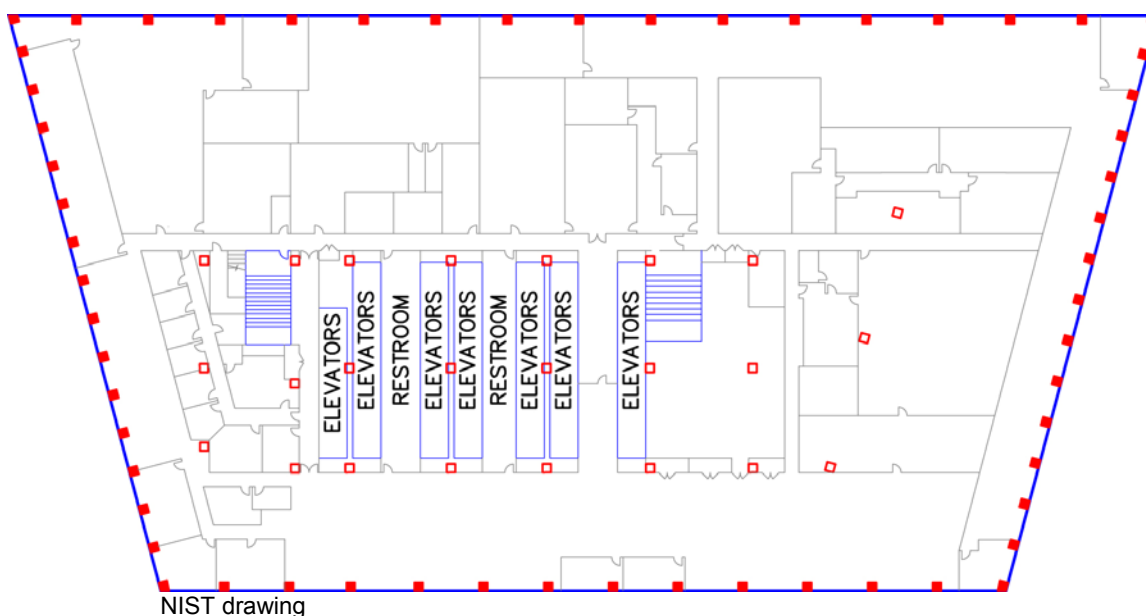
NIST drawing derived from material provided by American Express

**Figure 3–4. Schematic of Floor 8.**

### 3.3.4 Floors 9 and 10

The U.S. Secret Service moved into WTC 7 in 1995 and, as of September 11, 2001, occupied all of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor and all but the east side of the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. Secret Service staff recollected that there had been no prior tenants, although an undated Citigroup floor plan<sup>3</sup> shows some landscaping.

The 9<sup>th</sup> floor had a few walled offices on the building perimeter, but was mostly landscaped with cubicles. The number and layout of the cubicles is unknown. There was a room housing a generator and day tank at the north end of the west wall. East of the building core was an evidence storage area contained by fire-rated walls. It normally held paper materials (e.g., envelopes, folders, counterfeit currency, etc) related to case work. The evidence area doors were closed and locked at all times unless authorized access had been granted. There was a corridor between this room and the east face. A deduced approximate floor plan is shown in Figure 3-5.<sup>4</sup>



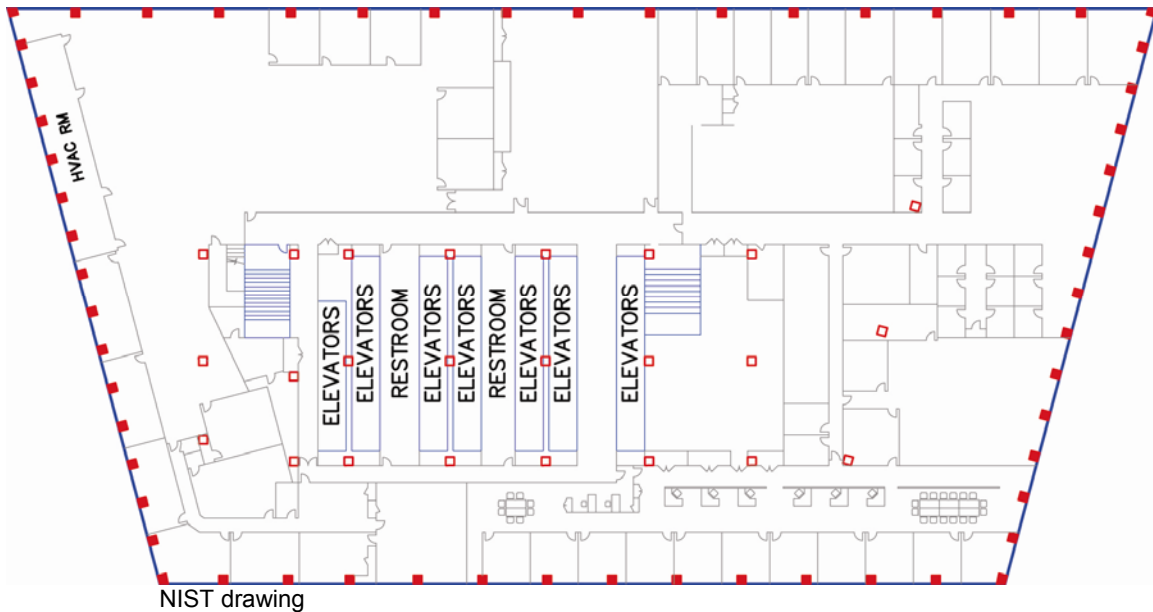
**Figure 3-5. Approximate layout of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor.**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, there was a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) room at the northwest corner and walled offices along half of the north wall and about one-third of the south face. Aside from the few offices on the north face, the remainder of the occupied floor space was open landscaping. As with the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, the number and layout of the cubicles is unknown. The east side of the 10<sup>th</sup> floor was described by the Secret Service as empty. There was a row of walled offices along the east side of the south face, which the Secret Service took over for future overflow. Architectural drawings show a row of walled offices along the vacant east side of the north face. From the east side of the building core to the east wall were mainly cubicles. A deduced approximate floor plan is shown in Figure 3-6.

<sup>3</sup> Floor plan provided by Citigroup, December 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Floor plans provided by U.S. Secret Service and supplemented by NIST interviews with Secret Service staff, May and June 2006.

Secret Service staff described the ceiling tiles as “normal.” Cables above the ceilings were for information transfer, video and alarm systems. The flooring was generally carpet tiles, although there were some areas with vinyl tiles.



**Figure 3–6. Approximate layout of the 10<sup>th</sup> floor.**

In building photographs, the windows on these two floors appear to be darker than those on the other floors. However, the Secret Service staff stated that they had done nothing to the windows during or after the build out. The fact that photos showed late fires and broken windows on the north face of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor indicated that a fire could be seen and could break these windows.

The cubicle areas were kept relatively clear of papers, since most of the papers in the Secret Service space were evidence and could not be left out overnight. On the desks, there may have been some files containing notes on active cases. The bulk of the paper was stored in file rooms and evidence vaults.

There were several pistols and shotguns stored on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. Secret Service staff stated that there were no other types of weaponry in WTC 7 and estimated that there were fewer than 500 rounds of ammunition for the small arms.

No fire was observed on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, and only a very late fire was observed on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor (Chapter 5). NIST did not model the 9<sup>th</sup> floor in detail. How NIST treated the floor is presented in Chapter 9.

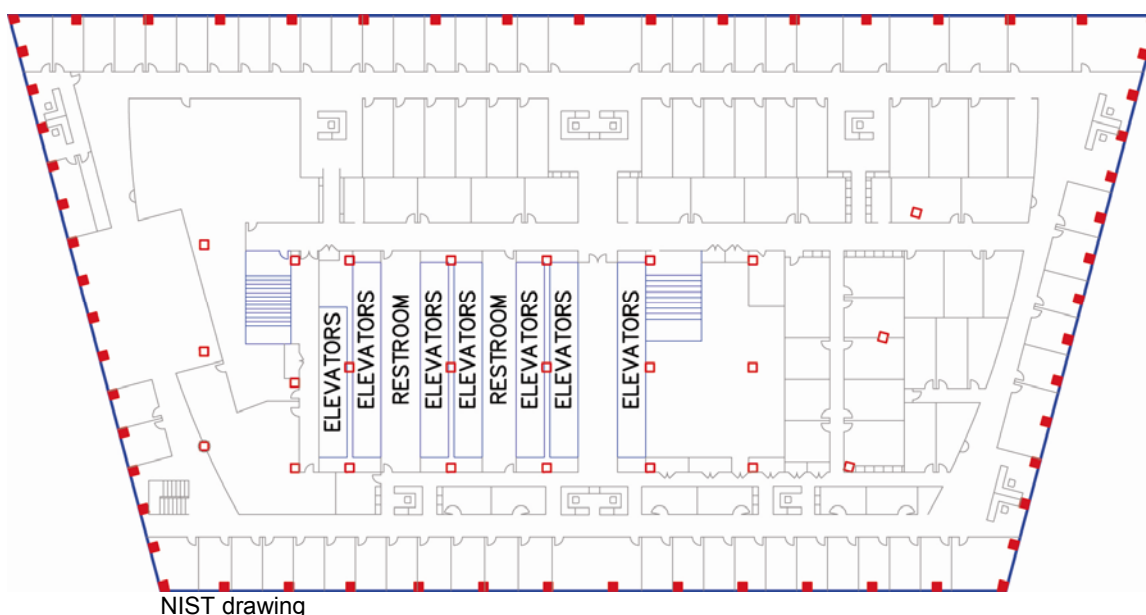
### 3.3.5 Floors 11 through 13

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) had occupied the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors and the north side of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor since about 1991. They outfitted the space to their needs, including removal of old

cables, plumbing fixtures, etc. Interviewed SEC staff had no recollection of records of any renovations after the SEC moved in.<sup>5</sup>

American Express occupied the southwest sector of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor.<sup>2</sup> The space was mainly filled with cubicles. There was also a small bank somewhere on the east part of the south face.<sup>5</sup> NIST was unable to obtain any other information regarding the occupancy of the east side of Floor 13.

The layouts of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors were similar to each other<sup>6</sup>, and a single floor plan was used for the fire simulations (Figure 3–7). The layouts of both floors were quite different from those of the other focus floors. The space was principally subdivided into walled offices, with a few cubicles. There were single-person offices all around the perimeter. Interior to these was a full corridor, with a second rectangle of solo offices opening outward onto the corridor. There was a second corridor inside these offices and outside the building core. Generally, one could not see outside the building from either corridor. The principal exception was near the 12<sup>th</sup> floor library on the west side of the building. There was frosted glass on some of the office walls.



**Figure 3–7. Schematic of Floor 12.**

There was a convenience stairway between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors, located near the southwest corner. The stairway was open, with no walls or doors.

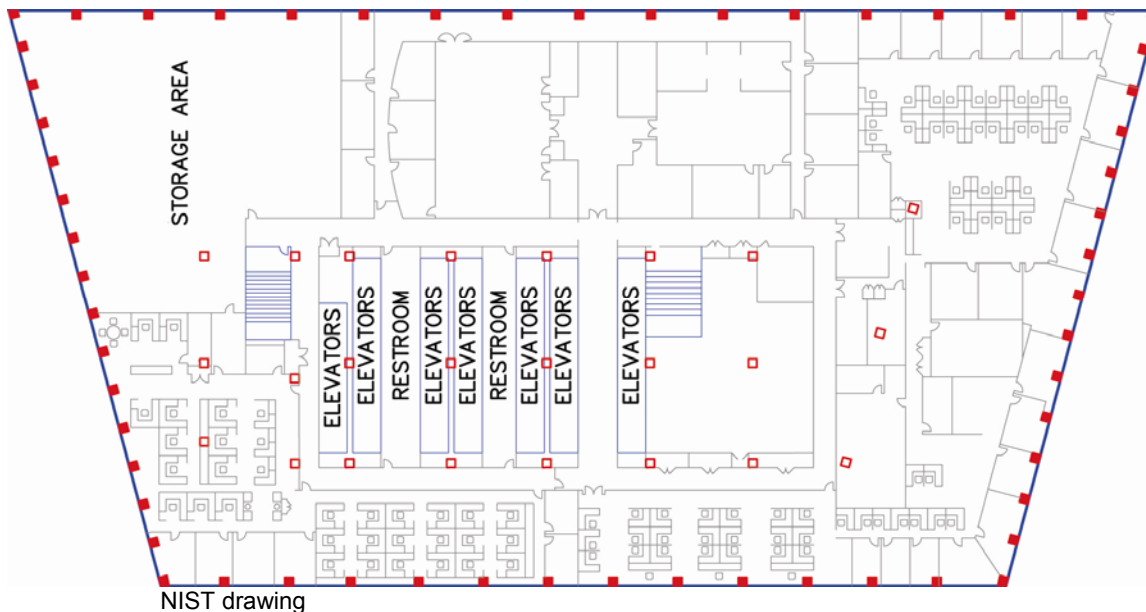
The furniture was mostly modular, generally consisting of decorative laminate over particle board. There were some older solid wood pieces scattered among the managers' offices. The combustible load in the offices was described as high by interviewed American Express managers. There was no clean desk policy. Open case files were left on surfaces. There were many bookcases, file cabinets, and cartons of files in the offices.

<sup>5</sup> NIST Interviews with U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission staff, December 2005 through March 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Floor plans provided by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

Occupants of the south side offices reported that a large number of windows were broken by the percussion and debris from the aircraft impact into WTC 1.<sup>5</sup>

The 13<sup>th</sup> floor was less heavily subdivided (Figure 3–8). Along the north perimeter was a corridor, with a hearing room and multiple testimony rooms facing it. There were additional testimony rooms on the northern portion of the east and west sides of the floor and a storage room at the northwest corner. The testimony rooms were sparsely furnished, with just a table and a few chairs.



**Figure 3–8. Schematic of Floor 13.**

### 3.3.6 Other Fire Floors

As will be seen in Chapter 5, early fires were noted on floors 19 (occupied by the Hartford Insurance Company), 22 (Federal Home Loan Bank), 29 (Salomon Smith Barney, SSB), and 30 (SSB). These fires were recorded in photos and videos from shortly after noon until about 1:30 p.m.

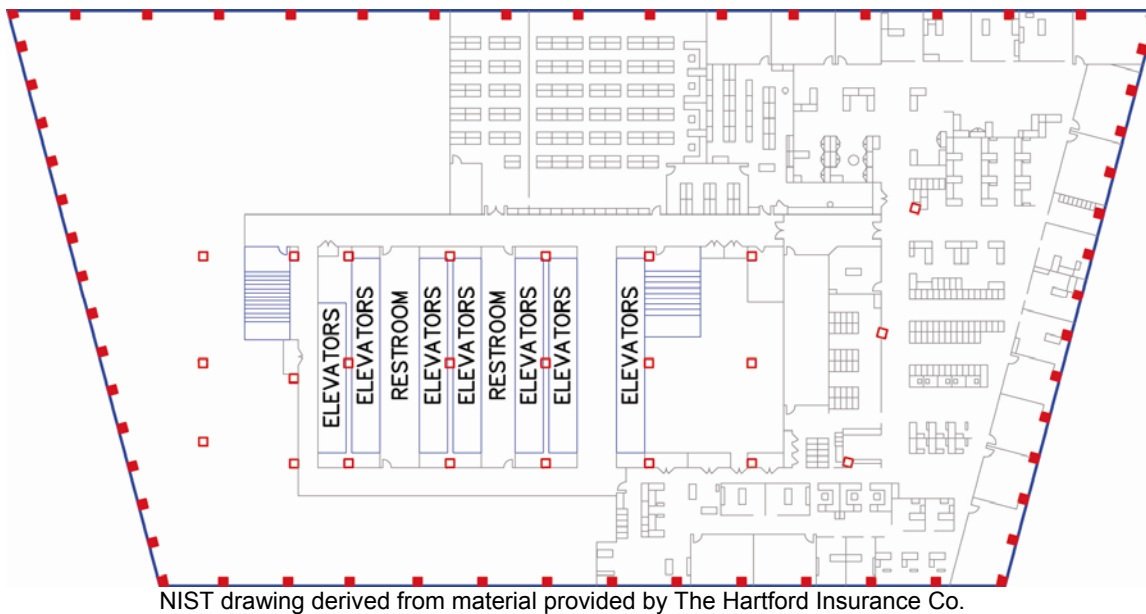
NIST was able to obtain floor plans for the east side of the 19<sup>th</sup> floor<sup>7</sup> (Figure 3–9) and the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> floors.<sup>8</sup> The latter two floors were nominally identical (Figure 3–10). While it is not clear why the early fires did not continue to propagate, there were no features of these floors that offered a mechanism for a long-lasting fire to burn without reaching an exterior wall by 5:00 p.m. (See Chapter 9.) No plan for the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor was available, but it is quite unlikely that continuation of the early burning would not have become visible.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, a small fire was observed at the far east of the north face at about 5:03 p.m. It was not observed at 4:52 p.m. and 5:09 p.m. On September 11, 2001, the 14<sup>th</sup> floor was unoccupied and should have had a very small combustible fuel load. From this evidence, the Investigation Team deduced that it was unlikely that there had been a sustained fire of appreciable heat output. (See Section 9.1.2.)

<sup>7</sup> Floor plan provided by the Hartford Insurance Company.

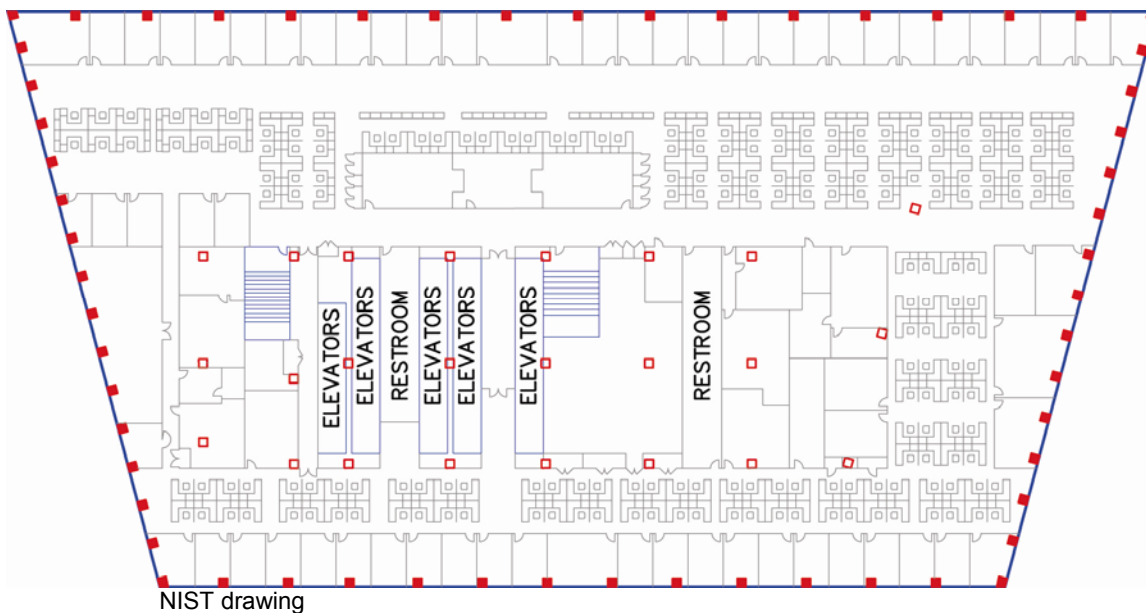
<sup>8</sup> Floor plans provided by Citigroup.

NIST also obtained layout plans for nearly all the remaining floors<sup>8</sup>, on which no signs of fires were observed. Nothing in these floor plans indicated construction that would conceal a sustained fire (such as that on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor) from being viewed from outside the building.



**Figure 3–9. Schematic of Floor 19.**

No information was available on the layout of the west half of the floor.



**Figure 3–10. Schematic of Floor 29.**

Small fires on these floors might not have been visible through the windows due to the extensive office partitions. However, it is likely that a fire of sufficient duration and intensity to threaten the floor

assemblies or the columns would have burned toward and broken windows on the north, east, or west sides, where photographs would have recorded their presence.

### 3.4 BUILDING COMBUSTIBLES

#### 3.4.1 Furnishings

The most prevalent combustibles on Floors 7 through 13 were the large array of workstations (also referred to as office modules or cubicles). There were almost certainly different types of workstations in the building. However, discussions with office furniture distributors and visits to showrooms indicated that, while there was a broad range of prices and appearances, the cubicles were fundamentally similar. A typical cubicle was bounded on four sides by privacy panels, with a single entrance opening. Within the area defined by the panels was a self-contained workspace: desktop (almost always a wood product, generally with a laminated finish), file storage, bookshelves, carpeting, chair, etc. Presumably there were a variety of amounts and locations of paper, both exposed on the work surfaces and contained within the file cabinets and bookshelves. These cubicles, as many as 200 or more per floor, were grouped in clusters or rows.

Unlike the case for the two WTC towers, there was no widespread spraying of jet fuel to ignite numerous workstations simultaneously. Rather, in the earlier hours of the WTC 7 fires, the fire would have spread from one individual workstation to another. Thus, the fire spread would have been dependent on the specific spacing of the cubicles and their ease of ignition. Replicating such fire growth was not feasible since (1) the information available on the office layouts was not sufficiently detailed, and (2) there was insufficient visual evidence to support such a detailed approach.

The combustible fuel load<sup>9</sup> for the floors was estimated as follows.

- Floors 7 and 8. The architectural drawings show densities of workstations similar to those on most of the fire floors in the WTC towers. (Recall that the south and east sides of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor were given to other uses.) The exact nature of the workstations was not known, nor was the mass of paper in each cubicle. Thus, the Investigation Team assumed the combustible masses (200 kg per workstation plus 50 kg of paper) were similar to those in the towers (NIST NCSTAR 1-5). For example, the architectural drawings of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor show about 100 workstations on the north side of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor and about 130 workstations on the north side of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, although the exact number of workstations on September 11, 2001 is not known. The floor area north of the building core was about 1500 m<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the initially estimated combustible fuel load was about 20 kg/m<sup>3</sup> (4 lb/ft<sup>2</sup>). Simulations of the fires with a higher combusted fuel load (Chapter 9) showed little effect on the rate of fire propagation.
- Floors 9 and 10. The floor plans did not indicate the number of workstations on these floors. As noted in Section 3.3.4, there would not have been excess paper on the desks or floors. Thus, the estimated combustible fuel load was the same as for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors (and the towers), about 20 kg/m<sup>3</sup> (4 lb/ft<sup>2</sup>). No fire was observed on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, and a sizable fire on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor was

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<sup>9</sup> In the fire simulations, the entire combustible fuel load can be burned. In actuality, not all of, e.g., a wood desk is consumed. Thus, the combusted fuel loads estimated for these simulations are somewhat lower than the actual fuel loads in prior surveys (NIST NCSTAR 1-5).

observed for only about an hour (Chapter 5). Thus, there was no means to estimate the effect of different combustible mass loadings on agreement with the observed fire growth patterns.

- Floors 11 and 12. As described in Section 3.3.5, these floors were divided into individual offices, rather than open landscaped. There were approximately 130 offices per floor, distinctly fewer than the number of cubicles on a fully landscaped floor. The mass of the furnishings per office was not known; the mass of additional paper materials was described as very high. As indicated in Section 9.3.1, the Investigation Team began with an initial estimation of the combusted fuel load of approximately 32 kg/m<sup>3</sup> (6.4 lb/ft<sup>2</sup>). Simulations of the fires with a lower combusted fuel load (Chapter 9) resulted in poor agreement with the observed fire spread rates.
- Floor 13. There was little information regarding the combustibles on this floor, and there was little visual evidence for estimating the effect of different combustible mass loadings on agreement with the observed fire growth patterns. NIST assumed a combusted mass similar to that on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors.

### 3.4.2 Diesel Fuel

There was considerable capacity for diesel fuel storage within and under WTC 7. The Investigation Team compiled information in order to estimate how much diesel fuel might have been available to feed fires in various locations in the building on September 11, 2001. The information collected (NIST NCSTAR 1-1J) is summarized as follows.

#### Fuel Tanks

Figure 3–11 through Figure 3–14, reproduced from NIST NCSTAR 1-1J, depict the floor-by-floor locations of the electrical generators, the day tanks, and the fuel lines that connected them to the below ground fuel tanks. The text in this section is abridged from that report, as well.

There were two 55 m<sup>3</sup> (12,000 gal) tanks located below the loading dock. These provided the primary supply for what was known as the *base building system*. This system, installed in 1987, consisted of two generators installed on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of WTC 7, along with a 1.25 m<sup>3</sup> (275 gal) day tank, which was set within a 2.5 m<sup>3</sup> (550 gal) capacity collecting tank. The day tank was replenished with a 0.33 L/s (4.4 gal/min) pump. Additions to the system in 1994 were:

- A single generator on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor with a 0.23 m<sup>3</sup> (50 gal) day tank located on the generator (Ambassador modification for the U.S. Secret Service).
- A single generator located on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, along with a separate 1.25 m<sup>3</sup> (275 gal) day tank (American Express modification).

The pumps that filled the three day tanks from the large storage tanks were located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

The Solomon Brothers system was installed in 1990. This consisted of two 27 m<sup>3</sup> (6,000 gal) tanks located under the loading dock and pumps located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor in a separate space from the base building pump sets. The Solomon Brothers system's nine generators were all located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Since the New York City regulations had a limit of one day tank up to 1.25 m<sup>3</sup> (275 gal) per floor, and



since the base generators located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor already made use of a 1.25 m<sup>3</sup> (275 gal) day tank, the SSB system used a pressurized fuel distribution system, in which the pumps continuously circulated fuel whenever the generators were running. There was enough fuel (160 L, 35 gal) stored at pressure in the valve rig and piping located on the ceiling near the northeast corner of the 5<sup>th</sup> floor (Figure 3-1) to start the diesel engines, which, in turn, would supply power to operate the circulating pump. The maximum fuel flow was 5.3 L/s (70 gal/min) at 340 kPa (50 psi).

The Mayor’s OEM system, installed in 1999, consisted of a separate 27 m<sup>3</sup> (6,000 gal) storage tank located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the building, along with its pumps, in a separate space from the other pumps. The generators and a 1.25 m<sup>3</sup> (275 gal) day tank were located on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor.

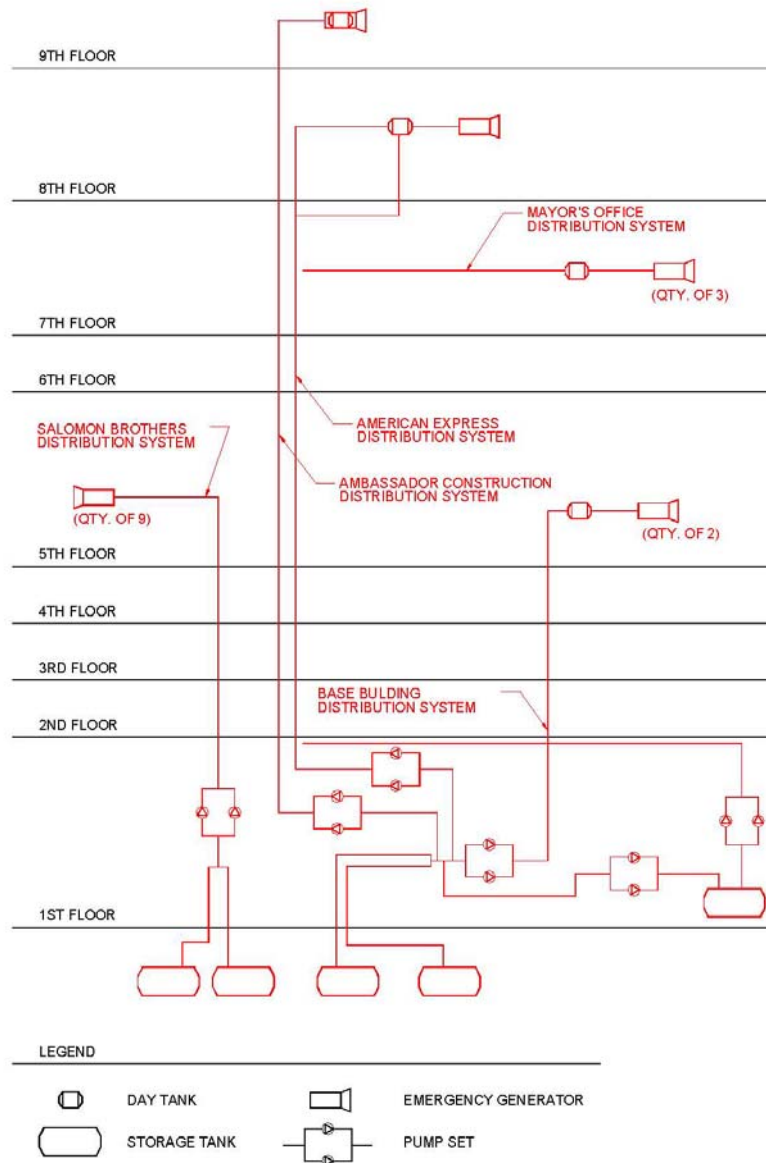
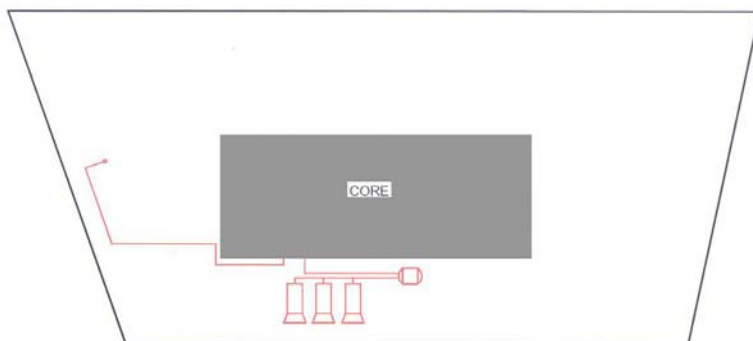
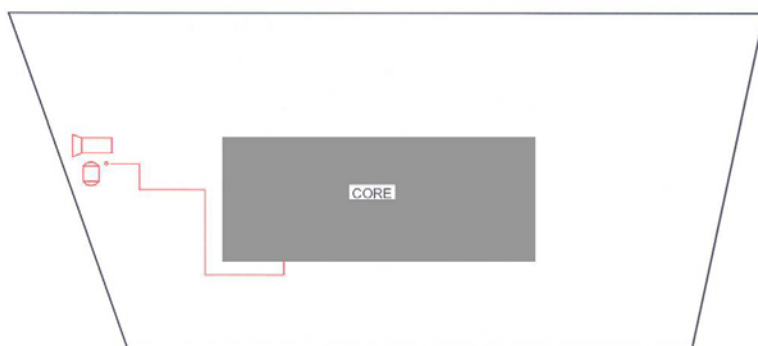


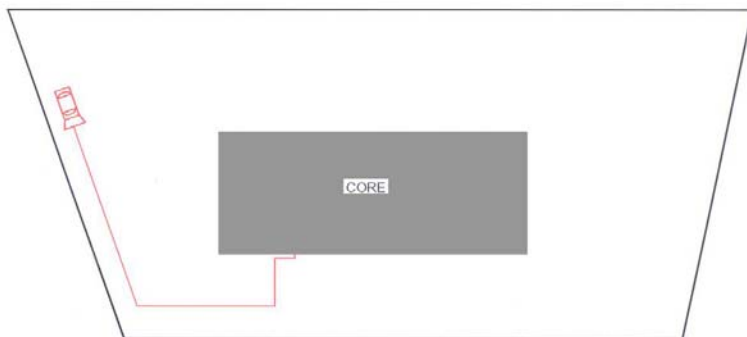
Figure 3–11. Section view of fuel oil distribution components in WTC 7. (NCSTAR 1-1J)



**Figure 3–12. Schematic of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of WTC 7 showing the locations of electrical generators and the fuel lines that connected them to below ground fuel tanks.**



**Figure 3–13. Schematic of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of WTC 7 showing the location of the electrical generator and the fuel line that connected it to below ground fuel tanks.**



**Figure 3–14. Schematic of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of WTC 7 showing the locations of the electrical generator and the fuel line that connected it to below-ground fuel tanks.**

## Fuel Accounting

The Silverstein Properties building management had a contract with a fuel oil supplier to check and fill the base building system supply tanks (which had a total capacity of 110 m<sup>3</sup> (24,000 gal)) regularly. Thus, NIST assumed that the base building tanks were full on September 11, 2001. In the days following the attacks on the WTC, a contractor (GZA 2002) recovered an estimated 100 m<sup>3</sup> (23,000 gal) of fuel from these tanks. The uncertainty in these volumes is unknown, and NIST assumed that approximately 10 m<sup>3</sup> ± 10 m<sup>3</sup> was unaccounted.

The distribution system was designed to keep the three day tanks full by transferring fuel from the base building supply tanks, so NIST also assumed that these day tanks (total capacity of 2.7 m<sup>3</sup> (600 gal)) were full on September 11, 2001. The fate of this fuel is unknown. The volume of the riser pipes was modest compared to the volume of the tanks, and it was not known how full of fuel they might have been. Thus, NIST assumed that the most fuel that could have been supplied to fires from the base building system was about 2.7 m<sup>3</sup> (600 gal).

The two 27 m<sup>3</sup> (6,000 gal) tanks for the Solomon Brothers system were found to be damaged by WTC 7 collapse debris and were empty; there was no significant quantity of fuel identified in the soil and gravel below the tanks. Thus, all 55 m<sup>3</sup> (12,000 gal) of fuel from this system would have been available to feed fires either at ground level or on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. The latter scenario would have required power to the pumps to remain, and a breach in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor fuel system that was not sensed by the leak detection system in the outer pipe. (Refer to Chapter 10 for further details on this scenario.)

No trace of the Mayor's OEM system tank nor the 27 m<sup>3</sup> (6,000 gal) of fuel it contained was ever found, so NIST assumed that the full volume might have been available to the building fires. This tank was located in a 1<sup>st</sup> floor room adjacent to the elevator bank, enclosed in 4 h fire rated construction, and provided with a total flooding fire suppression system. Since the pumps used to fill the day tank on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor would only run when the low fuel switch came on, and since the distribution piping would drain by gravity when the pumps were off, most of this fuel likely would only have been available on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. It is, however, possible that a break in the day tank supply line on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor could lead to a diesel fuel pool on this floor. (See Section 9.2.2.)

### **3.4.3 Other Combustibles**

In interviews with staff of WTC tenants, The Port Authority, and Silverstein Properties, NIST was told that there were no exceptional combustibles in the building other than the aforementioned small arms and limited ammunition on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor.

## **3.5 REFERENCES**

GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. 2002. Underground Storage Tank Closure Report, September 9.

Port Authority Facility Condition Survey Program WTCI-122-P, p. 23, April 1997.

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## Chapter 4

# FIRE PROTECTION MEASURES

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### 4.1 OVERVIEW

Active and passive elements were used in the fire protection systems of WTC 7. The active fire protection systems in WTC 7 consisted of fire sensors and alarms, notification systems, automatic fire sprinklers, water supplies, and smoke management. The sprinkler systems were the first line of defense. Water stored in the building from public sources or pumped from fire apparatus was supplied through dedicated piping to the area of the fire. Also present in the buildings were hoses, pre-connected to a water supply through standpipes located in the stairwells and other utility shafts. The standpipes provided hose connections at each floor for the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY). In addition, pre-connected standpipe hoses were installed for trained occupants to suppress fires.

Occupants in the building depended on the fire alarm and emergency notification system to detect fires and provide information for emergency evacuation. Capabilities were also designed for the ventilation system to operate in a way to purge smoke produced by fires from the building. Smoke purging was intended to be used for post-fire clean-up, but could be used during a fire event at the discretion of the FDNY.

Passive fire protection provided a second line of defense against structural damage by uncontrolled fires. The passive components included both horizontal and vertical fire barriers and spray-applied fire resistive material (SFRM). The concrete floor slabs were fire rated, as were the walls surrounding the power transformers and the building core. Because the building was fully sprinklered, no partitioning of the open floors (within a single tenant space) with demising walls was required by the New York City Building Code. Nonetheless, some of the interior walls in the tenant spaces provided temporary obstructions to flame spread. The structural steel columns, beams, and girders, as well as the underside of the concrete floor slabs, were coated with Monokote MK-5, a spray-applied fire resistive material, as documented in Chapter 2.

NCSTAR 1-4 includes a thorough examination of the design and installation of the active fire protection systems in WTC 7 (as well as in WTC 1 and WTC 2) and a description of the normal operation of fully functional systems and their potential effectiveness for controlling the fires on September 11, 2001. The applicable building and fire codes and standards, as well as the history of fires in these buildings, were also documented in NCSTAR 1-4. The following section provides a summary of the key information from NCSTAR 1-4 as it pertains to WTC 7.

There was no evidence to suggest that the fires that eventually brought WTC 7 down originated or propagated within the Con Edison substation located on the lower floors of WTC 7 (Appendix A). Thus, the Con Edison fire protection systems are not presented here. (Information on the design and operation of the substation can be found in Appendix A of this report.)

## 4.2 FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS

The fire alarm system for WTC 7 was the original system installed during the initial construction of the building (NIST NCSTAR 1-4C). Modifications were performed as needed to accommodate renovations and tenant fit-outs. Project development documentation found and analyzed was limited in this investigation to design criteria, specifications, riser diagrams, and a limited number of tenant fit-out drawings that included fire alarm work.

The Basic Design Criteria document, labeled as "Revised November 5, 1984," was prepared by Syska & Hennessy, and it referenced the applicable local building codes at the time of construction. The basic system was required to contain the following components to monitor and annunciate the status of its devices and initiate an appropriate response (Syska & Hennessy 1984):

- A Fire Command Station (FCS) located in the lobby of the building on the entrance floor;
- Remote alarm display panels in the Mechanical Control Center and Fire Safety Director's location;
- Manual fire alarm stations provided in each story along the path of escape with additional stations installed so that the maximum travel distance between stations would not exceed 200 ft (60 m);
- Speakers located on all floors and stairways that could be operated in the FCS—the elevator intercommunication system was provided separately;
- Visual alarm devices (strobes) in public common use areas;
- Floor warden stations on each floor that provided two-way communication with the FCS;
- Standpipe firefighter telephone system with communication stations provided at the FCS, each floor near the standpipe riser, gravity tank rooms, and fire pump rooms;
- Fire sprinkler water flow alarm and malfunction monitoring;
- Tenant fire alarm panels monitoring for alarm and system fault conditions;
- Fan shutdown and restart system for smoke control;
- Elevator recall upon its smoke detector activation;
- Fire stair door releases; and
- Smoke and heat detection.

The only performance criterion in the design that exceeded the minimum requirements of the applicable codes was the statement requiring that "All monitoring, communication and control for the fire alarm system shall be on a separate multiplex channel with its own processor." (Syska & Hennessy 1984)

#### 4.2.1 System Architecture and Operation

The fire alarm system chosen for WTC 7 was the Firecom 8500 (Syska & Hennessy 1984). The main user interface was at the Fire Command Station, where the head-end fire alarm panel provided central monitoring and control through a monitor with keyboard, illuminated displays, microphone, and control switches. The Class B Signaling Line Circuit riser from the head-end panel went to a Terminal Transmission Box (TTB) on each floor, which was the data gathering panel for the detection, notification and control devices for each floor. The TTB provided Class B conventional Initiating Device Circuits and Notification Appliance Circuits for the manual pull stations, smoke detectors, and speakers. The TTB also provided the circuit interfaces to control the door releases and air handling units. Bulk amplification for all loudspeakers associated with the emergency voice alarm communication system was generated from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor.

The specifications provided a sequence of operation during alarm conditions for the different types of devices found on the fire alarm system (NIST NCSTAR 1-4):

1. Activation of a manual pull station, smoke detector, heat detector, duct detector, or sprinkler water flow switch would:
  - a. Automatically sound all loudspeakers on the floor of alarm and the floor above;
  - b. Automatically transmit the fire alarm signal to the fire department via a central monitoring office;
  - c. Unlock the doors in the fire stairs; and
  - d. Sound a fire alarm signal and provide location identification at the FCS, Mechanical Control Center, and Fire Safety Director's location.
2. In addition to #1 above, the duct detectors would:
  - a. Stop air supply and air return from the floor of alarm activation by automatically shutting down air supply and return fans serving these floors; and
  - b. Open smoke exhaust dampers of smoke shafts on the floor of alarm activation, and start associated smoke exhaust fans.
3. In addition to #1 above, the elevator lobby detectors and sprinkler water flow switches would cause elevators serving the floor of alarm activation to return non-stop to street floor or to the lowest landing above street floor when the lowest landing of the elevator bank was above street floor. If the lowest landing were the floor of alarm activation, the elevator would return to a landing two floors above.

#### 4.2.2 Design, Installation and Maintenance

NIST reviewed documentation consisting of modified riser as-built diagrams and floor plans with fire alarm device locations (Syska & Hennessy 1984). Comprehensive as-built drawings for the system were not located.

The modified riser diagrams were conceptual in nature and provided the installation contractor with the number of devices to be installed on each floor, type of fire alarm equipment on each floor, and the number and type of wire interconnecting the devices and equipment. The modified riser diagram had areas crossed-off, which indicated that the area had undergone renovation. Additional renovation drawings provided a section of the riser with its modifications. The final drawings consisted of the partially modified riser diagrams with areas crossed-out, separate drawings containing a revised section of the riser, and floor plans with the locations of the devices on each designated floor.

From the available drawings, it appears that the contractor was responsible for determining the final circuit configurations for the devices and equipment. Limited information was found on the specific location of the fire alarm control equipment, initiating devices, and communication equipment.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby was designated as the FCS. On a typical floor, manual pull stations were located at each stair entrance, and smoke detectors were provided in electrical/telephone closets and in elevator lobbies. Sprinkler water flow switches and valve supervisory switches in each stairwell were monitored by fire alarm interface devices. Duct smoke detector locations were not identified, but the criteria required detectors to be installed in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems over 3,400 m<sup>3</sup>/h (2,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/min). Fire warden stations were typically installed on the north wall outside the elevator lobby.

The Investigation Team did not locate drawings that provided guidance on the installation of the fire alarm devices to meet tolerances required by code and the manufacturer. The riser diagrams indicated that the smoke detector, manual pull station, speaker and strobe circuits were configured to be a Class B type. The use of a Class B circuit was consistent with the minimum requirements for performance, but a Class B circuit does not have the higher level of survivability associated with a Class A circuit.

The Investigation Team also did not locate drawings showing the number of wires required to run between each device, and between the device and equipment, nor were fire alarm power calculations located to document the capability of the fire alarm equipment to power the number and type of devices connected to the equipment. No quality control documentation was found for the installation, and no testing and commissioning procedures were located.

Inspection, testing, and maintenance were mandated by the applicable building codes after a fire alarm system was installed and in operation. The building owner was responsible for inspection, testing, and maintenance of the systems. The inspection, testing and inspection were permitted to be done by qualified and experienced personnel employed by the owner, or the work could be performed under contract. These duties were conducted by a contractor; and, based upon the information reviewed for 2000 and 2001, were adequately documented.

### **4.2.3 Fire Alarm System Performance on September 11, 2001**

Information on the performance of the WTC 7 fire alarm system on September 11, 2001 was limited to the record of the offsite system monitoring company. The printout shown in Figure 4–1 indicates the system registered an alarm at 10:00:52 a.m., just after the collapse of WTC 2. Even though a fire alarm is indicated, alternatively the record might have been the result of dust entering smoke detectors. Although the entire alarm history record was obtained from AFA Protective Services (AFA), the system monitoring company, the amount of information it shows is typical of system monitoring operations and is meager.



Records show that the system was placed on test condition every morning at about the same time, and specifically had been tested for the seven days preceding September 11, 2001. The readout for this date is shown in Figure 4–1.

```

09/11/01 14:48:22 DYJ 4612 **** FULL CLEAR ****
09/11/01 14:47:22 LATE 3923 SYSTEM TEST OVER
09/11/01 14:47:22 COMMENT: TEST: ALL
09/11/01 14:47:21 COMMENT: LAST SET: 091101 64742
09/11/01 10:00:52 1510 CO TO CLASS E AREA:1 *T
09/11/01 06:47:43 COMMENT: RIC: WILLIAMS
09/11/01 06:47:03 RIC 4210 PLACE ON TEST CAT:11
09/11/01 06:47:03 COMMENT: 091101 647 091101 1447
09/11/01 06:47:02 COMMENT: TEST: ALL
-----

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**Figure 4–1. Monitoring station history tape record for the WTC 7 fire alarm system on September 11, 2001.**

The fire alarm history tape record is read from the bottom to the top. Some entries occur as the result of normal operations, and others are the result of actions taken by operators. The bottom line of the record shows that at 6:05:01 a.m. on September 11, 2001, the fire alarm system completed a normal communications check with the central monitoring station. This check was made every day.

At 6:47:02 a.m., AFA placed WTC 7 in a “TEST: ALL” condition. This was normally done in response to a request from the building manager. Ordinarily, it was requested when maintenance or other testing was being performed on the system, so that any alarms received from the system were considered the result of the maintenance or testing and were ignored. NIST was told by AFA that for systems placed in the TEST condition, alarm signals were not shown on the operator’s display, but records of the alarm were recorded into the history file.<sup>1</sup>

At 6:47:03 a.m., the record includes an explanation of the request to put the system in the TEST condition. Continuing to read from bottom to top, the date and time the system was placed in TEST was recorded. In this case it was 091101 647 (6:47 a.m., September 11, 2001), and the system would have automatically gone back to normal monitoring after eight hours, a system default value, at 091101 1447 (September 11, 2001, 2:47 p.m.). On the next line above, “RIC” identifies the AFA operator; 4210 is a code number for the “PLACE ON TEST” message. CAT:11 indicates the authority of the person requesting the action, identified in the next line as Williams. Records indicated that the building alarm system was often placed on test.

At 10:00:52 a.m., a fire condition [1510 CO TO CLASS E] was indicated in WTC 7. The \*T at the right end of that record indicates that the system was in TEST at the time. The alarm record also shows that the fire condition was in AREA 1. NIST has been told by AFA that AREA 1 was not a specific area within

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Richard Kleinman, President, AFA Protective Systems, dated July 16, 2003, based on a request by NIST.

the building, but referred to the entire building. In other words, a fire detected in any fire alarm zone in the building would have resulted in the same AREA 1 identification at the monitoring station. The time, 10:00:52 a.m., is shortly after the collapse of WTC 2. NIST could not determine whether this fire alarm was triggered by smoke from a fire or by dust entering smoke detectors. None of the interviews conducted by the Investigation Team contained any mention of an alarm received at the Fire Command Station.

At 2:47:21 p.m. and 2:47:22 p.m. (14:47:21 hr and 14:47:22 hr), at the time the eight hour “TEST: ALL” condition was set to expire, additional actions were recorded that ended in an operator (DYJ) entry to “FULL CLEAR.” Since there were several large fires in the building at this time (Chapter 5), it appears that either the building alarm system was not functioning after about 2:47 p.m. (and probably after 10:01 a.m.), or that the offsite monitoring system or its link to WTC 7 was incapacitated in some way.

A much greater amount of information would have been collected and recorded by the fire alarm equipment within WTC 7. None of that information was recovered from the building systems, which were destroyed in the collapse. Typically, and in the case of WTC 7, specific fire information beyond the fact that a fire condition has been detected is rarely sent to the monitoring site.

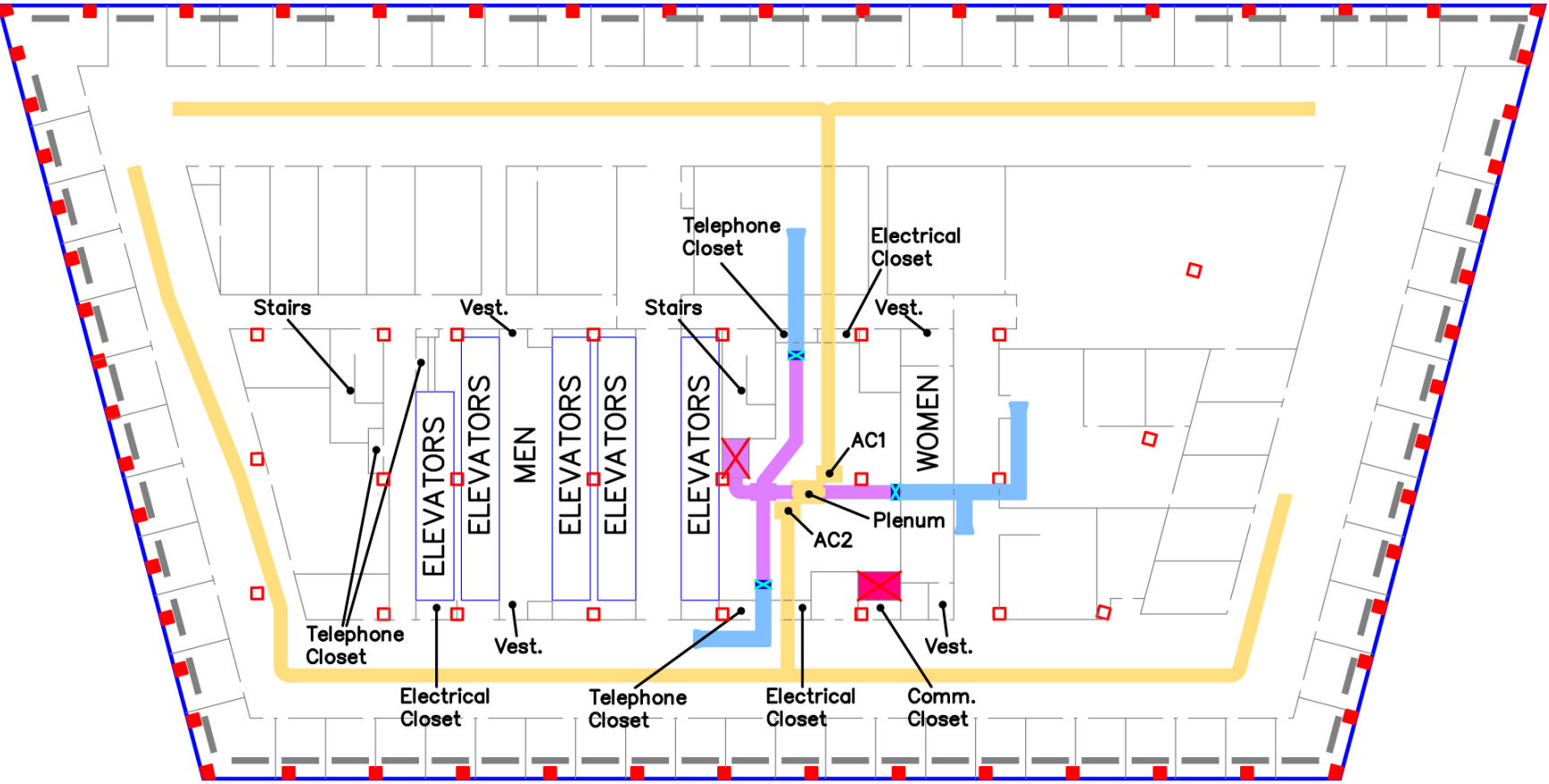
### **4.3 SMOKE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

In the event of fire in WTC 7, there were two primary means to control smoke movement throughout the building:

- Smoke barriers, which were typically integrated into the architecture of the building, as well as into the ductwork through which heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) air flowed. The use of smoke barriers is referred to as compartmentation, and walls and smoke dampers are used to form these compartments.
- Air movement equipment, either dedicated for smoke management or used to provide HVAC air to the building.

The design of the smoke management systems was guided by local building code requirements, widely used and accepted installation standards, and fire protection engineering practice. The design and installation of the smoke management systems in WTC 1, WTC 2 and WTC 7 have been documented in NCSTAR 1-4D; this section provides an overview of the systems in WTC 7.

The original building layout consisted of a mechanical equipment room located on each floor. Building ventilation was provided on the tenant floors (Floors 7 through 47) for the base building configuration in WTC 7 by supply air fans located on each floor. As shown in Figure 4–2, conditioned air was distributed to the floor in two zones, corresponding to the north/east, and south/west portions of the building. The fan room served as a return plenum. Return air was drawn into the fan room via ducts that connected the fan room to the return air plenums above the occupied space of each floor. Make-up (outdoor) air was drawn into the fan room via make-up air shafts that connected to the exterior of the building either at the roof or at the 6<sup>th</sup> floor via louvers through the side of the building.



- Supply Fans/Ductwork
- Return Ductwork
- Return Dampers
- Smoke Exhaust/Purge Ductwork
- Smoke Exhaust/Purge Shaft
- Make-up Air Shaft
- Perimeter Hot Water Radiant Heater

Figure 4-2. Air distribution system, 24<sup>th</sup> floor, WTC 7.

Consistent with the NYCBC, the WTC 7 HVAC systems were designed to incorporate a smoke purge mode, by which each floor of the building could be exhausted/purged of smoke manually on a floor-by-floor basis from the Fire Command Center, which was located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the building at the main lobby security desk. Two smoke exhaust fans were originally located within the building on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and 47<sup>th</sup> floor. The return air ductwork was connected to the exhaust duct. Return air either dumped into the fan room via the return dampers in each branch duct or was exhausted via the smoke exhaust riser. A smoke exhaust damper would have opened at the shaft within each mechanical room, and the return dampers would have closed to exhaust smoke in the smoke purge mode. Curtain fire dampers were located throughout the building where ductwork crossed fire rated shaft walls, consistent with the NYCBC. Separate pneumatic smoke dampers were used in the fan room to direct airflow within HVAC ductwork.

During the early 1990s, Salomon Smith Barney (SSB) performed a major tenant retrofit to floors 28 through 45. The retrofit included the combining of adjacent floors into single floors, the relocation of HVAC shafts, and the provision of new HVAC equipment to supplement base building equipment. This renovation included changes to the smoke management system, detailed in NIST NCSTAR 1-4D.

The building operations manual for WTC 7 specified three alarm modes pertaining to operation of the building HVAC systems. ALARM-1 initiated shutdown of HVAC equipment based on duct smoke detection. ALARM-2 initiated smoke purge on the affected floor. ALARM-3 specified the smoke purge sequence for non-affected floors. The smoke management sequence pertaining to the smoke purge function involved exhausting the fire floor and pressurizing the remaining floors with supply air.

Local Law #16 required that all buildings in occupancy group E (business), which included WTC 7, be provided a manual override capability for exhausting one floor at a time at a rate of six air changes per hour, or 1 cfm/ft<sup>2</sup> of floor area, whichever is greater. For WTC 7, with a footprint area of approximately 48 000 ft<sup>2</sup>, this would require an exhaust capacity of at least 48,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/min (82,000 m<sup>3</sup>/h). The base building system serving the lower floors of the building provided a smoke exhaust capacity of 36,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/min (61,000 m<sup>3</sup>/h), which was not consistent with the minimum value specified by code. An 84,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/min (143,000 m<sup>3</sup>/h) exhaust fan was provided for the SSB floors during the tenant retrofit, which exceeded the capacity required by code.

WTC 7 was sprinklered throughout and was, therefore, exempted from the requirement for stair pressurization systems. The building was provided with a Class E fire alarm system consistent with the NYCBC, was provided with emergency power serving all emergency systems, and was equipped throughout with fire dampers at duct penetrations into vertical shafts, consistent with the NYCBC.

NIST found no documentation to indicate whether the smoke management system operated or did not operate on September 11, 2001. The following inferences indicate that it was unlikely that the system was in operation that day. First, as noted in Section 6.5.2, around 11:00 a.m., the stairways were filling with smoke, indicating that the smoke management system was not in use up till that time. Few people entered the building after that time. Second, at about 2:30 p.m., the decision was made to abandon the building (Section 6.6), so the system was not turned on after that. Third, in the NIST interviews with FDNY personnel, there was no mention of action to activate the smoke purge system. Fourth, none of the visual images showed smoke flowing from the exhaust louvers on Floors 6 and 47.

## 4.4 SPRINKLERS, STANDPIPES, AND PRECONNECTED HOSE SYSTEMS

### 4.4.1 Overview

Available documents and drawings indicated that automatic fire sprinkler systems were installed in nearly all areas of WTC 7. The exceptions were the electrical equipment spaces (including switchgear, networking, and switchboard rooms), generator rooms, and bathrooms. In addition, the 5<sup>th</sup> floor was not protected by sprinkler systems, with the exception of the mechanical space on the east side of the core (Syska & Hennessy 1984). The loading berth and fuel oil pump rooms in WTC 7 were protected by dry-pipe sprinkler systems. The first floor room containing the 6,000 gal fuel oil tank was protected by an Inergen clean agent fire suppression system.<sup>1</sup> The elevator storage area beneath the tank was protected by a wet pipe sprinkler system.

A standpipe system was installed in each of the two stairwells. Pre-connected hoses were located in the stairwells at each floor and were connected to the standpipe. In addition, a supplemental pre-connected hose cabinet was located on the east side of each floor. Additional hose cabinets were installed in different locations on different floors in order to achieve the required reach for the hose lines.

### 4.4.2 Details of the Standpipe and Sprinkler Riser Systems

The primary water supply for WTC 7 was provided by the 12 in. water main beneath Washington Street. Fire department connections (FDCs) were located on the south, east, and west sides of the building. A 3 m<sup>3</sup>/min (750 gal/min) manual fire pump that served the entire building was located on the ground floor.

Three vertical zones within WTC 7 were identified based on the water source and flow path (Figure 4-3).<sup>2</sup>

- Low zone. A 2 m<sup>3</sup>/min (500 gal/min) automatic fire pump, located on the ground floor, supplied the sprinkler and dual standpipe systems from the ground floor through the 20<sup>th</sup> floor. A cross connection main, located on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor, connected the risers to each other; an isolation valve could be closed to isolate the risers from each other. The pump was provided with an emergency power source via an automatic transfer switch (Syska & Hennessy 1984).
- Mid-level zone. The 21<sup>st</sup> floor through 39<sup>th</sup> floor sprinkler systems and dual standpipe systems running from the 21<sup>st</sup> floor through the 44<sup>th</sup> floor were supplied from two connected, two story high, gravity-fed water storage tanks on the 46<sup>th</sup> floor. Each tank had a holding capacity of 70 m<sup>3</sup> (17,500 gal). The water could be used for both domestic plumbing and fire suppression, although the last 7,500 gal in each tank was reserved for fire use. The make-up water to fill each tank was supplied by three 1.7 m<sup>3</sup>/min (435 gal/min) capacity booster pumps via an 8 in. domestic express supply riser from the second floor. Each pump was provided with two float switches in each tank. A single pump operated when the water level dropped to a set point established by the electrode control unit. The pumps operated individually, but would operate simultaneously if the demand exceeded the capacity of one pump (Syska & Hennessy 1984), whether due to domestic

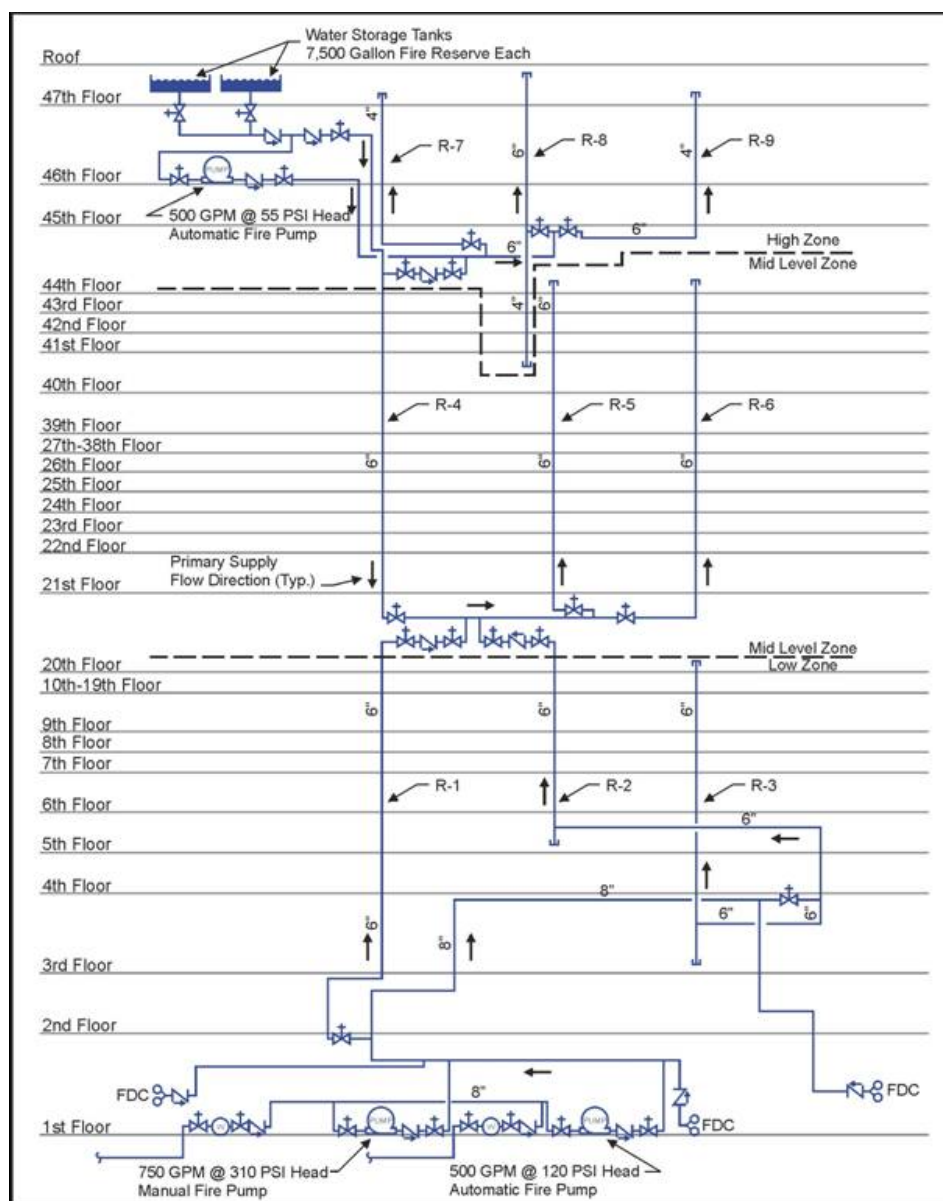
<sup>1</sup> Inergen is a proprietary fire suppressant, consisting of 52 % (by volume) nitrogen, 40 % argon, and 8 % carbon dioxide.

<sup>2</sup> This drawing is schematic in nature. For example, for space reasons, the two story water tank system is shown with the plumbing on the 46<sup>th</sup> floor and the tanks on the 47<sup>th</sup> floor. In actuality, the tanks extended from the 46<sup>th</sup> to the 47<sup>th</sup> floor.

usage or fire water usage. A control valve in the discharge piping below each tank enabled isolating the tank from the standpipe and sprinkler systems.

- High zone. The 40<sup>th</sup> floor through 47<sup>th</sup> floor sprinkler systems and dual 45<sup>th</sup> floor through 47<sup>th</sup> floor standpipe systems were supplied from the storage tanks on the 46<sup>th</sup> floor via a 2 m<sup>3</sup>/min (500 gal/min) booster pump on the 46<sup>th</sup> floor. The pump was a single stage pump rated for 380 kPa (55 psi) at 2 m<sup>3</sup>/min (500 gal/min) (Syska & Hennessy 1984). The water discharged from the tank on the 46<sup>th</sup> floor, flowing down to a cross connection on the 44<sup>th</sup> floor where it fed each riser.

The water supply met the requirements of the NYCBC 9NIST NCSTAR 1-1E.



Source: NIST NCSTAR 1-4B.

Figure 4-3. WTC 7 water riser schematic.

Check valves were located at the top of the mid-level zone risers at the connection with the high zone cross connection main. The check valve was oriented so that water could not flow from the high zone down to lower zones. However, the high zone could be served from lower zones through the check valve by the manual fire pump, which served as a secondary supply. Check valves also prevented water from flowing from the mid-level zone down to the low zone. However, the mid-level zone could be served from the low zone through the check valves by the manual fire pump (which served as a secondary supply) or from excess pressure served by the city supply and automatic fire pump serving the low zone.

The emergency power generators described in Chapter 3 provided back-up power to emergency systems in the building, including the fire pumps.

#### **4.4.3 Automatic Sprinkler System Performance under Selected Fire Scenarios**

Hydraulic calculations were performed to evaluate the expected sprinkler system performance based on the configuration of the water supply (NIST NCSTAR 1-4B). The objective of the analysis was to characterize the capabilities of the water supply within each water supply zone. A commercial computer program, Hydraulic Analyzer of Sprinkler Systems, Version 7.5 was used to perform the calculations (HRS Systems 2004).

Calculations were performed with variations in the number of sprinklers flowing water for the high and mid-level zones to observe the effects on how long the flow could be maintained. For the low zone sprinkler systems, water was supplied from an automatic fire pump drawing suction directly from the NYC distribution. Therefore, the supply would be continuously provided as long as the water distribution and electrical systems were intact and operational.

The hydraulic analyses relied on the minimum delivered density and pressure requirements in NFPA 13 as the criteria for evaluating the fire control capacity of the sprinkler systems. These required densities and pressures are based on the assumption that an installed fire sprinkler system is designed to control a single fire. In addition, in the analyses performed here, small fires were assumed to be approximately the size of the area covered by a four-sprinkler array (i.e., approximately 70 m<sup>2</sup>, 750 ft<sup>2</sup>). In fact, available performance history indicates that typical fires in high-rise office buildings are controlled or suppressed by fewer than four sprinklers, lending additional conservatism to the estimates of system capacity presented here. Finally, the calculations were based on availability of the primary water supplies only, without any consideration for fire department actions to provide a secondary water supply. In NYC such action is routine, and the secondary water supply is considered infinite in duration, with equivalent or higher capacity to the primary water supply.

Representative system configurations were selected within each water supply zone to provide bounding results (in terms of available pressure, flow and duration) for each vertical hydraulic zone in the buildings. The calculations were based on the following bounding conditions for each vertical zone:

- Number of Operating (Opened) Sprinklers: Four sprinklers (smaller than the required design area); 8 to 15 sprinklers (design area for Light or Ordinary Hazard Occupancy); 18 to 25 sprinklers (larger than the required design area).
- Floor Level within the Vertical Zone: 47<sup>th</sup> floor (highest floor system in high water supply zone); 40<sup>th</sup> floor (lowest floor system in high water supply zone); 39<sup>th</sup> floor (highest floor system in mid-

level water supply zone); 21<sup>st</sup> floor (lowest floor system in mid-level water supply zone); 20<sup>th</sup> floor (highest floor system in low water supply zone); 1<sup>st</sup> floor (lowest floor system in low water supply zone)

Supply calculations for each combination of these conditions provided estimates of the water flow and pressure that would be expected based on typical sprinkler system arrangements. The duration was determined by dividing the storage capacity by the calculated flow. The calculations did not account for the supplemental make-up supplies from the automatic refill lines supplied by the domestic water supply systems. The results of these calculations were intended to approximate the actual delivered discharge densities based on representative sprinkler system layouts provided from the available documentation of the systems. The results Represent the actual performance more accurately than would a calculation using the minimum required flows determined by multiplying the density times the design area specified by NFPA 13 for the applicable hazard.

The calculations for Light Hazard areas in WTC 7 used a coverage area of 16 m<sup>2</sup> (168 ft<sup>2</sup>), a value for the discharge coefficient, k, of 5.6 gal/min/psi<sup>1/2</sup>, and ½ in. orifice sprinklers. The first floor loading dock area was provided with a dry pipe sprinkler system and had a layout consistent with Ordinary Hazard spacing (coverage area of approximately 12 m<sup>2</sup> (126 ft<sup>2</sup>) per sprinkler). Table 4–1 is representative of the results for the different zones in WTC 7 for fire areas of 140 m<sup>2</sup> (1 512 ft<sup>2</sup>) and either 9 or 12 sprinklers operating, depending upon whether it was designated as Light Hazard or Ordinary Hazard, respectively. Additional results of sprinkler configurations are presented in NCSTAR 1-4B.

The most demanding floor with regard to water supply duration is the lowest floor in the zone, due to the larger head pressure and flow. Reference Standard RS-17-2, Section 2-1 of the NYCBC, requires a minimum water supply duration of 30 min, which was exceeded in all the calculations shown in Table 4–1.

**Table 4–1. Calculated sufficiency of sprinkler water supply.**

Zone	Floor	Sprinkler Heads/Area (ft <sup>2</sup> )	Supply (gal/min)	Calculated Delivered Density (gal/min/ft <sup>2</sup> )	Required Density (gal/min/ft <sup>2</sup> )	Supply Duration (min)
high	47	9/1512	265	0.18	0.10	57
high	40	9/1512	336	0.22	0.10	45
mid	39	9/1512	245	0.16	0.10	61
mid	21	9/1512	290	0.19	0.10	52
low	20	9/1512	285	0.19	0.10	unlimited
low	1	12/1512	311	0.21	0.15	unlimited

A cluster of six cubicles occupied a floor area of about 380 ft<sup>2</sup>. Thus, it appears that, if the primary water supply were intact, there would have been a sufficient delivered density and duration in all zones to control fires of four such clusters, either all on one floor or single clusters on four floors.

These calculations do not take into account any make-up (secondary) water supply. As noted in Section 4.4.2, the secondary water to the high and mid zones was supplied from the city water mains, so that under normal conditions, there would be a continuous water supply for an indefinite period of time. The



only supply for the low zone was from the city water mains. Thus, should the city water mains be unavailable (as was the situation following the collapse of WTC 1 on Sept. 11, 2001), there would still have been sufficient water to control four six-cubic fires in the mid or high zones, but there would have been no water to control a fire in the lowest 20 floors.

#### 4.4.4 Supplemental Manual Operations and Related Procedures

The City of New York has a challenge, in common with other large cities, involving firefighting operations among the ever-growing number of high-rise office buildings. The Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) addressed this challenge by developing a standard set of procedures for dealing with high-rise office building fires. In 1986, the FDNY developed *Fire Fighting Procedures* and *Fire Operations for High-Rise Office Buildings* to meet the challenge (FDNY 1990). Among the procedures and operations outlined in the manual were the methods used by the FDNY to supplement automatic sprinkler systems and standpipe systems within high-rise office buildings.

The NYC Building Code required all new high-rise buildings to have a primary water supply and a secondary water supply to supplement the fire protection water demands (NYCBC 1968). In buildings over 90 m (300 ft) in height, a manual fire pump, or combination of manual fire pumps must be installed as a secondary water supply. However, fire department connections (FDC) were also required as an auxiliary water supply. Therefore, in buildings over 90 m (300 ft) in height, the FDNY procedures included connecting to the FDC to provide a tertiary supply to the automatic sprinkler systems and standpipe systems in high-rise office buildings (NIST NCSTAR 1-1D and 1-1G). A system of color-coded caps identified whether the FDC supplied a standpipe system, automatic fire sprinkler system, combined sprinkler and standpipe system, or a high pressure supply for upper floor level systems. Specific procedures and recommended pressures were outlined in the *Fire Fighting Procedures* and *Fire Operations for High-Rise Office Buildings* manual developed by the FDNY (FDNY 1990).

The FDNY had two types of pumper engines, conventional and high-pressure. The conventional pumpers contained two-stage pumps with either 4 m<sup>3</sup>/min (1 000 gal/min) or 8 m<sup>3</sup>/min (2 000 gal/min) capacity. The high-pressure pumpers contained a third stage capability that can supply 2 m<sup>3</sup>/min (500 gal/min) at 4.8 MPa (700 psi). Whether used singly or supplementarily, these pumpers have the capability of supplying floors in high-rise buildings up to 110 stories. The *Fire Fighting Procedures* and *Fire Operations for High-Rise Office Buildings* manual suggested supplying the standpipe systems with at least two pumpers at two different siamese connections to ensure that an adequate water supply was added to the system.

The *Fire Fighting Procedures* and *Fire Operations for High-Rise Office Buildings* manual outlined the recommended pump pressures to be used based on floor level and nozzle type attached to the hose lines. The pressures were based on calculations that took into account nozzle pressure, friction loss of three lengths of 2½ in. hose, head loss, system friction losses, and the friction loss of two lengths of 3½ in. hose supplying the siamese FDC.

The WTC 7 building maintenance and engineering staff was familiar with the locations of emergency equipment and the required actions to support the systems in an emergency situation. Such actions during a fire event included starting the manual fire pump on the first floor. Other emergency actions included closing isolation valves to support systems in the case of a ruptured pipe. The WTC 7 operations and

maintenance manual included a riser diagram that indicated the arrangement of valves on the systems (PANYNJ 1987). The use of system isolation valves was referenced as follows: “Emergency conditions unrelated to a system response to a fire, which may require actions based on this manual include: Isolation of a riser or sprinkler zone because of a rupture, also a mechanical failure which will activate the flow switch resulting in an alarm. Both conditions require isolation of the ruptured pipe or sprinkler head.”

#### **4.4.5 Suppression Systems Performance on September 11, 2001**

NIST learned from Investigation interviews that around 11:30 a.m., there was no water emerging from the hydrant system and no water in the standpipe system (Section 6.5 of this report). It was reported that hose lines connected to the standpipe system in WTC 7 were used to fight fires in other buildings of the WTC complex prior to the collapse of any of the buildings. Thus, it is likely that the primary water supply to the mid and upper levels of WTC 7 was diminished by the time the towers collapsed, and that the city water supply, which was the primary source of water for the lower level of the building, was severely compromised even before the fires began in WTC 7.

As will be seen in Chapter 5, fires were seen on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> floors as early as 12:10 p.m. The flames were no longer seen on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor after 12:27 p.m. and the fires on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> floors were no longer evident after 12:47 p.m. These three floors were in the mid-level zone, where the primary water supply to the automatic sprinkler system was from the tanks on the 46<sup>th</sup> floor. As seen in Section 4.4.3, the sprinkler system had the capacity to control fires on multiple floors, each involving a few cubicles, and it is possible that this is why those fires were only observed for a short time. Note, however, that since there were no people on those floors around this time, none of the Investigation interviews contained observations of functioning automatic sprinklers.

The water supply to the automatic sprinklers from the ground floor to the 20<sup>th</sup> floor was directly from the city water supply, which had been interrupted following the collapse of the WTC towers. Thus, the fires on the 7<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> floors went unchecked by the automatic sprinklers. The only evidence of fire on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor is a single photograph showing smoke marks above two windows on the far south of the west face (Chapter 5). NIST was unable to obtain evidence to indicate why this fire did not spread.

### **4.5 ACTIVE FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS: SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION FINDINGS**

#### **4.5.1 Function on September 11, 2001**

The active fire protection systems installed in WTC 7 were designed to alert building occupants to the smoke and heat produced early in a fire, to activate sprinklers in the fire zone when a threshold temperature was reached, and to manage the smoke in a way that aided evacuation and fire fighting operations. None of these systems played a role in preventing the loss of life (no lives were lost in WTC 7), increasing the effectiveness of fire fighting operations (the FDNY did not attempt to extinguish fires in WTC 7), or in keeping the building standing (WTC 7 collapsed about seven hours after WTC 1) on Sept. 11, 2001. Nonetheless, a number of significant findings resulted from NIST's investigation of the active fire protection systems. These are listed below.

#### 4.5.2 Alarm System

- The alarm system in WTC 7 was only capable of determining and displaying (a) areas that had at some time reached alarm point conditions and (b) areas that had not. The WTC 7 alarm system recorded information at one location in the building: the FCS in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby.
- On September 11, 2001, the fire alarm system installed in WTC 7 sent to the monitoring company only one signal indicating the time and date of a fire condition in the building. This signal, sent shortly after the collapse of WTC 2, did not contain any specific information about the location of the fire within the building. No subsequent signals were recorded or sent, despite the prevalence of fires in the building until the building collapsed.
- No fire alarm system equipment or documentation from WTC 7 was located during the site clean-up on site, nor were there indications that anyone looked for it during the clean-up.
- Transmission of critical data outside the building to a monitoring station would have provided one means to preserve event data. Although modern systems are capable of this communication, it is not done in practice.
- Survivability of alarm systems data on computer hard drives, memory modules, or printouts in building fires and collapse environments is not addressed in present installation standards.

#### 4.5.3 Smoke Management

- WTC 7 was sprinklered throughout and was, therefore, exempted from the requirement for stair pressurization systems. The building was equipped throughout with fire dampers at duct penetrations into vertical shafts, consistent with the NYCBC.
- The base building system serving the lower floors of WTC 7 provided a smoke exhaust capacity of 36,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/min (61,000 m<sup>3</sup>/h), which was less than the minimum value required by Local Law #16 (48,000 ft<sup>3</sup>/min), as of 1984.
- Consistent with the NYCBC, the WTC 7 HVAC systems were designed to incorporate a smoke purge mode, by which each floor of the building could be exhausted/purged of smoke manually on a floor-by-floor basis from the Fire Command Center, which was located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the building at the main lobby security desk.

#### 4.5.4 Fire Suppression

- In general, the water supplies, automatic sprinklers, and standpipe/pre-connected hose systems in WTC 7 exceeded the minimum applicable code requirements, as well as associated engineering best practices.
- Sprinkler protection was installed throughout WTC 7 on September 11, 2001, with the exception of specific rooms and spaces where sprinkler protection was permitted to be omitted by the NYCBC.

- The water supplies for Floors 21 through 47 included large capacity storage tanks and direct connections to the NYC water distribution system. These supplies provided redundant sources of water for the standpipe and sprinkler system infrastructures. The storage tanks provided adequate duration of supply for normally expected fire exposures to allow the fire department to respond and supplement the demand.
- Water for floors 1 through 20 was supplied directly from the NYC water distribution system through two service lines from the street main on Washington Street. An automatic fire pump was used to supply the water to the combined sprinkler and standpipe risers. The water supply tanks located in the upper part of the building did not service the lower floors. Therefore, there was no source of water for controlling fires on the lowest 20 floors when the NYC system became inoperable following the collapse of WTC 1.
- The suppression systems in WTC 7 required manual operation of the electric fire pumps in order to provide secondary water. An automatic supplemental water supply is required by NFPA 14 and represents current best practice. Whether or not the building maintenance staff performed this task on September 11, 2001, could not be confirmed.
- Based upon the documents examined, the sprinkler systems installed in WTC 7 were appropriately designed, with calculated water spray densities considerably greater than typically provided for high-rise office buildings. The sprinkler systems met or exceeded the applicable installation requirements in the NYCBC and NFPA 13.
- Calculations showed that the capacity of the automatic sprinkler system was sufficient to control fires involving about four clusters of cubicles. This might explain why the fires on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> floors did not spread into the afternoon.
- Documentation indicated that the standpipe pre-connected hose system installations were consistent with the applicable requirements in the NYCBC. They were not consistent with the flows and durations required in the 2003 version of NFPA 14. Since the water supply was interrupted, and since there were no people in the building to use the hoses, these inconsistencies would not have affected the outcome of the fires.
- No information was found that indicated that the generator/fuel day-tank enclosures in WTC 7 on floors 5 and 7 were protected by automatic sprinklers or other special hazard suppression systems; the NYCBC does not require a suppression system for this application. However, the generator rooms on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> floors were protected with sprinklers.
- A 24 m<sup>3</sup> (6,000 gal) fuel oil storage tank on the first floor was protected with an Inergen clean agent system. Its role on September 11, 2001, could not be determined due to the absence of any information regarding the system's performance.

## 4.6 FIRE BARRIERS

The characteristics of office walls, masonry walls for mechanical spaces, and reinforced concrete for transformer vaults and floors were described in Chapter 2. Depending on the information available, this included the specified or selected fire ratings.

## 4.7 STRUCTURAL THERMAL INSULATION

### 4.7.1 Material Selection, Application, and Condition

As presented in Chapter 2, Monokote MK-5 was the sprayed fire resistive material (SFRM) used to insulate the structural elements in WTC 7. Chapter 2 also presents the available documentation of the thermal properties and installed condition of the insulation.

### 4.7.2 Simulations of Thermal Protection

To understand the susceptibility of various structural components to fires of varying duration, NIST performed a number of computations in which a single beam, column, or floor assembly was subjected to elevated temperature. Typically, these simulations involved a furnace-like exposure, i.e., immersing the structural element in a steady state temperature bath. This was conservative, since in an actual fire, the gas temperature field to which the element was exposed would rise less quickly and would wane as the combustibles were consumed. The temperatures at various locations in the structural element were monitored as time progressed.

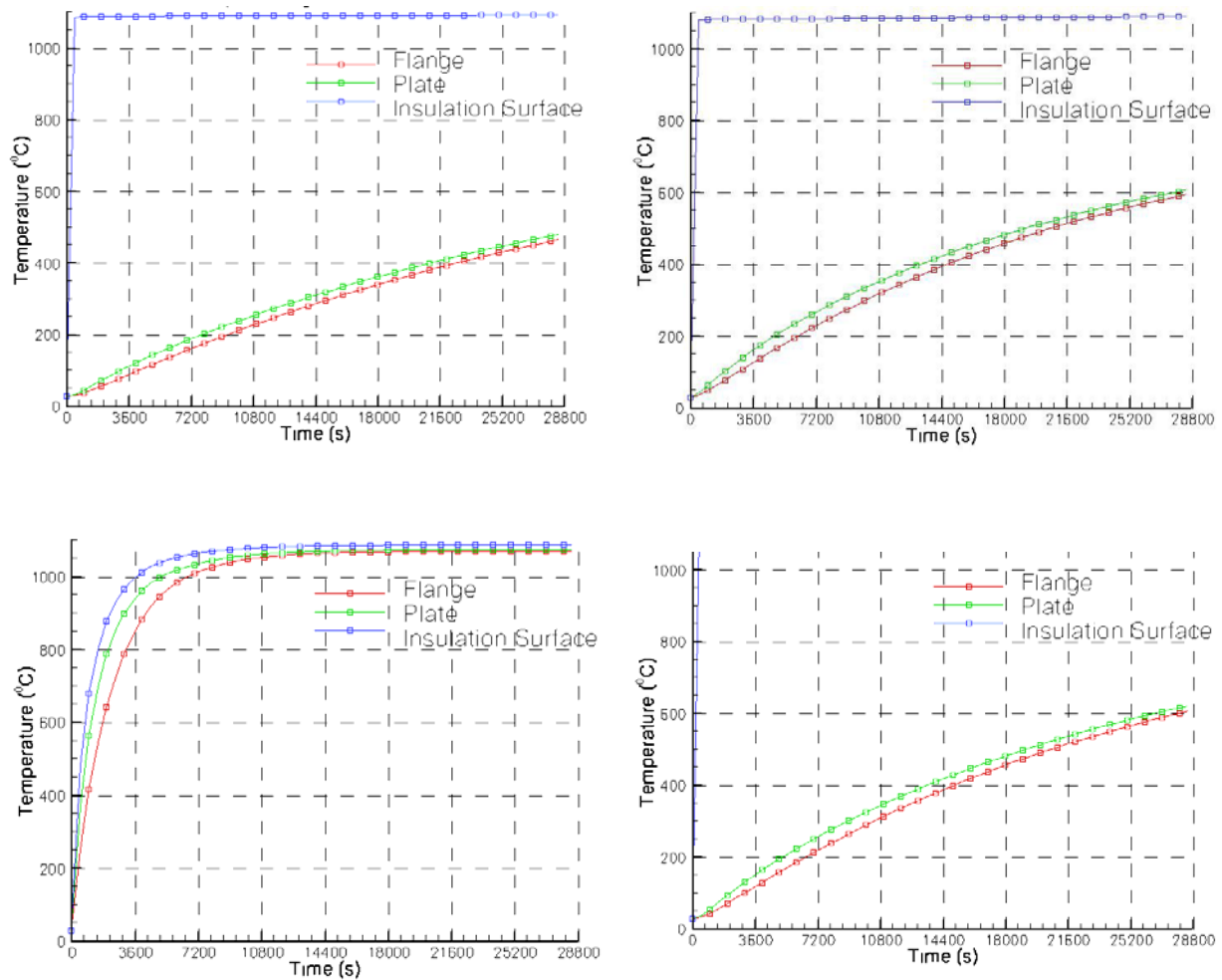
The computations were performed for five entities:

- Columns. For these sizes, the WTC 7 specifications were for a 3 h fire resistance rating. This was to be achieved with a 7/8 in. thick application of Monokote MK-5.
  - One of the heaviest columns, typified by column 79, which had a W14x730 steel section and additional steel plates welded across the open face of the flanges. Core columns 58, 61, and 73 to 81 also had this massive section. (See Chapter 2.)
  - A lighter column, with a W14x500 steel section. This is typical of a number of columns in the building core and the perimeter.
- Composite Floor Assemblies. Typical of sections of a tenant floor, these consisted of one of three sizes of steel beams supporting a corrugated steel deck (3 in. corrugations) and a 5.5 in. thick concrete slab, 2.5 in. of which was above the steel deck. The bottom of the slab was insulated with 3/8 in. thick Monokote MK-5 to achieve a 1 h fire resistance rating. The floor beams had a 2 h fire rating specified, for which a 7/16 in. thick application of SFRM Monokote MK-5 was assumed. (See Chapter 2.) The beam sizes were:
  - One of the lightest floor beams, with a W14x22 steel section.
  - A medium mass floor beam, with a W24x55 steel section.
  - A heavy floor beam, with a W36x135 steel section.

Figure 4–4 shows the temperature rise in the heavy column.

- In the upper left graph, the column is insulated with 7/8 in. of Monokote MK-5 (based on the specified fire rating) and exposed to an air temperature of 1100 °C.

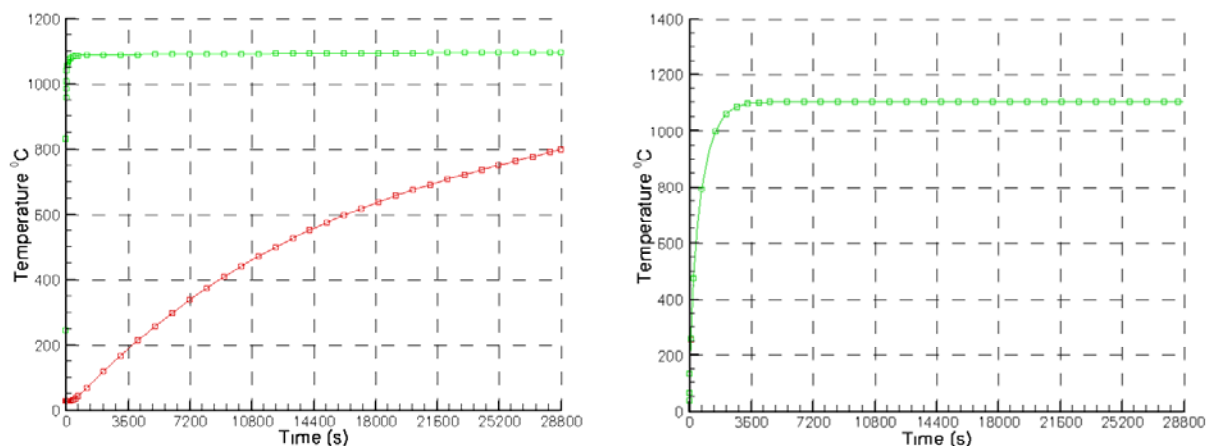
- The upper right graph shows the rise in steel and insulation temperatures for a thinner, 9/16 in., layer of insulation.
- The lower left graph shows the rise in steel and insulation temperatures with no applied insulation.
- The lower right graph is a repeat of the upper left graph, but with a higher exposure air temperature of 1400 °C.



**Figure 4–4. Calculated temperature rise in Column 79 at varying insulation thicknesses and thermal exposures.**

With either thickness of insulation applied, it would take at least 7 h (3,600 s = 1 h) for the steel to reach 600 °C, the temperature at which the steel would have lost approximately 50 percent of its strength. (See NIST NCSTAR 1-3D for a thorough description of the loss of strength as a function of temperature.) For the fires in the WTC towers and in WTC 7 (see Chapter 9 of this report), the compartment air temperatures typically were near 1100 °C for less than 2 h. Even if the room temperature from the fires reached 1400 °C, a temperature that might be realized in a wind-aided fire and an extreme upper limit to the air temperatures probable in the types of fires experienced in WTC 7, the steel temperature would remain low enough after 4 to 5 h of such intense fire exposures for the steel to preserve its strength. By contrast, with no thermal insulation, the column would lose much of its strength within the first half hour of exposure to 1100 °C.

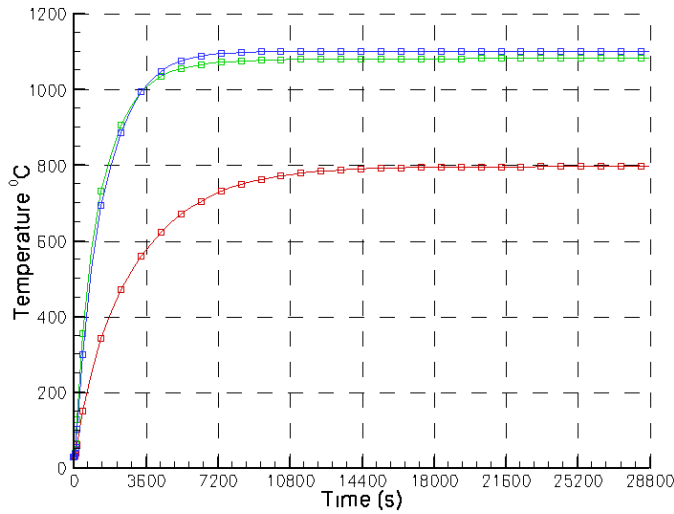
Figure 4–5 shows the results of similar calculations for the lighter, W14 x 500, column. The green data represent temperatures at the outer surface of the thermal insulation; the red data represent temperatures at the interior of the center of the web plate. For the insulated column, shown in the left plot, the web temperature reaches 600 °C in about 4 h. With no insulation (right plot), this temperature is reached in a matter of minutes. As expected, the lighter columns heat somewhat more rapidly, but, if properly insulated, the steel temperature would remain low enough after 3 h of such intense fire exposures for the steel to preserve its strength.



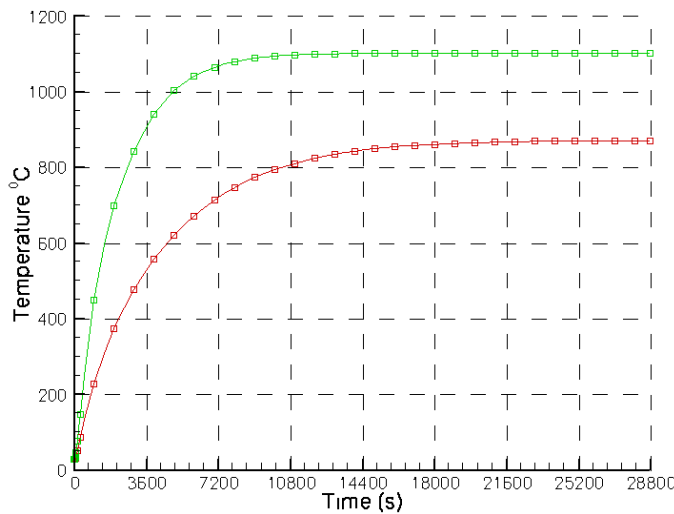
**Figure 4–5. Calculated temperature rise in a typical core or perimeter column exposed to 1100 °C air temperature.**

Left: insulated with 7/8 in. Monokote MK-5; right: uninsulated.

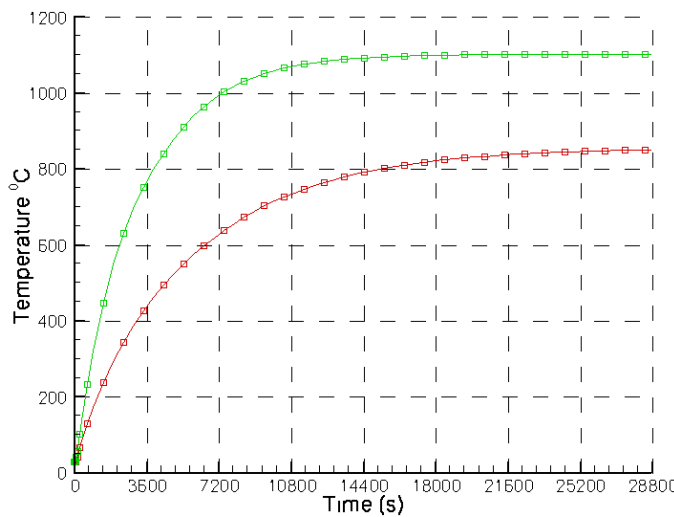
Each composite floor, with one of three representative beam sections, was exposed to an 1100 °C air temperature from below. Figure 4–6 shows the result of heating the floor with the insulated lightest steel section. The lower flange of the steel reached compromising temperatures in about 15 min, the upper flange in about 1 h. Figure 4–7 and Figure 4–8 show the slower temperature rises in the insulated midweight and heaviest beams, respectively. The lower flange temperatures are virtually identical to the web plate temperatures. Figure 4–9 shows the temperatures reached at the top and bottom of a typical floor slab at the thinnest sections located at the top of the steel deck corrugation.



**Figure 4–6. Calculated temperature rise in a W14 x 22 floor beam in an insulated composite floor assembly exposed to 1100 °C air from below.**  
Blue: lower flange; green, web plate, red: upper flange.

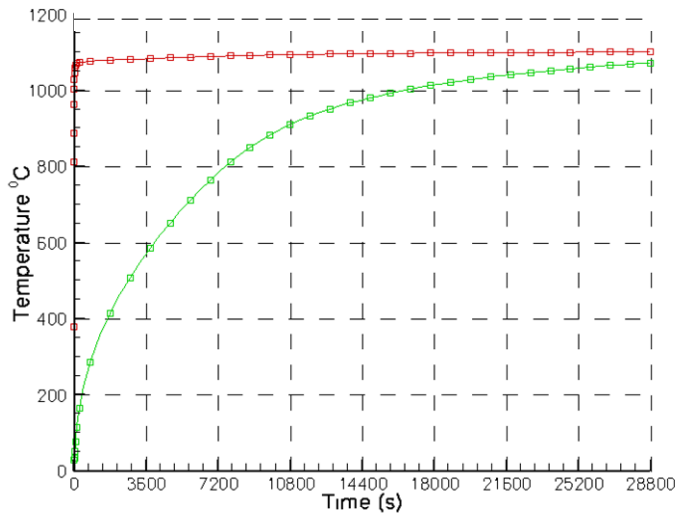


**Figure 4–7. Calculated temperature rise in a 24WF x 55 floor beam in an insulated composite floor assembly exposed to 1100 °C air from below.**  
Green, lower flange and web plate, red: upper flange.



**Figure 4–8. Calculated temperature rise in a 36WF135 floor beam in an insulated composite floor assembly exposed to 1100 °C air from below.**  
Green, lower flange and web plate, red: upper flange.





**Figure 4–9. Calculated temperature rise in an insulated floor slab heated from below.**  
Green: top of slab; red: bottom of slab at top of corrugation.

### 4.7.3 Findings – Structural Thermal Insulation

- For the heaviest columns in WTC 7, when insulated for a 8 h, simulations show that it would take an exposure of about 7 h at post-flashover upper layer gas temperatures to raise the steel temperature to 600 °C, the point at which the steel strength has been reduced by half. As will be seen in Chapter 9, this is far longer than the time over which post-flashover gas temperatures were sustained in the computed WTC 7 fires. For comparison, this steel temperature would be reached in under ½ h if the insulation were not applied.
- Simulations for the insulated lighter columns in WTC 7 show that this steel temperature is reached in about 4 h. This is also longer than the time over which post-flashover gas temperatures were sustained in the computed WTC 7 fires. With no applied insulation, the steel temperature reaches 600 °C in under 1/2 h.
- Simulations of different size beams in a floor assembly showed that the two lighter steel beams (insulated for a 2 h rating) and the bottom of an insulated floor slab (insulated for a 1 h rating), exposed to 1100 °C air temperatures, reached 600 °C in approximately 1 h. The heaviest floor beam reached 600 °C in almost 2 h. These times are modestly longer than the time over which post-flashover temperatures were sustained in the computed WTC 7 fires.

## 4.8 REFERENCES

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## Chapter 5

# WTC 7 VISUAL EVIDENCE: DAMAGE ESTIMATES, FIRE TIMELINE, AND COLLAPSE TIMELINE

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter documents the visual evidence used to guide the reconstruction of the fires and the global collapse analysis of WTC 7, as NIST NCSTAR 1-5A did for the World Trade Center towers. Many of the details concerning the general approaches to acquiring and cataloging the visual material, the timing of the photographs and videos, the development of fire time lines, and additional analyses of the visual material, were documented in that report. This Chapter is organized as follows:

- Section 5.2 provides specific details relevant to WTC 7 with regard to the visual material that was recorded on September 11, 2001 and approaches that were used to identify, collect, log in, time, and catalog the material.
- Section 5.3 provides background information about the local geography and wind direction, relevant WTC 7 structural and architectural details, a numbering system for describing window locations on WTC 7, and some interior details needed to understand the observations of fires and damage.
- Section 5.4 presents how NIST identified the initial damage to WTC 7 and documented the time development of fires within the building. This section also provides details of the analysis and procedures employed to develop the time lines. The primary output is a series of numerical data sheets as a function of time that provide window-by-window assessments of whether or not a fire was present, and, if present, a measure of the local intensity, whether or not smoke was flowing from a particular window and, if observed, an indication of whether the flow was light or heavy, and whether or not glass was in place for a given window. The use of the data has been assisted by visualizing the contents using color façade maps.
- Section 5.5 reproduces multiple images showing the damage to WTC 7 by debris generated by the collapses of the two 110 story WTC towers, WTC 2 (South Tower) and WTC 1 (North Tower), at 9:58:59 a.m. and 10:28:22 a.m., respectively. The collapse of WTC 1, in particular, caused structural and façade damage to the WTC 7 south and west faces. Both the extent of the damage and the limitations of the imagery for assessing this damage are emphasized. The results of the visual analysis were used to develop color-coded damage maps for the south and west faces and for each floor of WTC 7.
- Shortly after the towers collapsed, fires began to appear at multiple locations in WTC 7. Section 5.6 first discusses possible ignition sources for these fires. Next, the visual evidence for the growth and spread of these fires until the building collapsed at 5:20:52 p.m. is presented and discussed. The descriptions of the fires at various times are then visualized using color-coded façade maps.

- Section 5.7 presents imagery of the collapse of WTC 7. From these images, the Investigation Team derived important clues concerning the time sequence of the collapse and possible initiating events.

Since there is a large amount of detail in this chapter, a summary of the debris damage to WTC 7 is given in Section 5.5.3. A summary of the progress of the fires is given in Section 5.6.4. Finally, a summary of the observations of the building collapse is given in Section 5.7.5.

## **5.2 COLLECTION, ORGANIZATION, AND TIMING OF VISUAL MATERIAL**

### **5.2.1 Collection of Visual Material**

Section 2.1 in NIST NCSTAR 1-5A provides a description of the camera-rich environment that existed in New York City on September 11. When the two towers were struck by aircraft, the damage was well above nearby buildings and was, thus, easily visible from surrounding areas. As a result of this environment and the locations of the towers, an immense number of cameras in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and New Jersey captured the aircraft impacts and resulting fireballs, initial damage, fire growth and spread, and the collapses of WTC 1 and WTC 2. This wealth of visual information proved to be invaluable for determining the collapse mechanisms of both towers.

As discussed below, there was considerably less information available concerning WTC 7. However, the images that were available provided sufficient information to guide the reconstruction of the WTC 7 collapse.

The identification and collection of visual material related to WTC 7 were fully integrated into the overall effort. Relevant material was identified and collected in the same manner as described in Section 2.2 and Section 2.3 of NIST NCSTAR 1-5A. An overview of sources for photographs and videos is included in Section 2.3.

The overall amount of visual material from September 11 was immense. Well in excess of 7,000 photographs, representing more than 200 photographers, and over 300 hours of video, from professional organizations and over 40 individuals, on nearly 150 separate tapes were assembled and logged.

It is difficult to estimate the actual amount of relevant visual material recorded on September 11, 2001, and, thus, to estimate how complete the Investigation collection efforts were. There is certainly material that has not been identified and collected. However, NIST believes that the large collection of visual material that it assembled is sufficient for purposes of the Investigation.

### **5.2.2 Organization of Visual Material**

It would have been impossible to use the vast amount of visual material collected for the Investigation effectively without some means of organizing and cataloging the material. An approach was adopted in which all collected visual materials judged to be relevant to the Investigation were converted to digital format (if necessary) and saved in a large digital database. Section 2.5 in NIST NCSTAR 1-5A includes details about the digital database and preparation of materials for inclusion in the database.

To organize the images in this database, NIST used Cumulus, a commercial database program written specially for organizing visual material. This software was designed to collect individual “assets” (i.e., photographs and video clips) in specified catalogs and to allow the assets to be characterized with a variety of attributes assigned using specially designed forms for data entry. Once a catalog had been assembled, it was possible to search for assets having a specific attribute or combinations of attributes.

Two separate catalogs, one for photographs and one for video clips, were created for visual materials collected as part of the Investigation. Each catalog had a similar set of attributes that was used to characterize the assets that were included. These attributes were chosen in consultation with Investigation staff, based on the expected needs of the reconstruction of the day's events. Additional details concerning the catalogs and search approaches are included in Section 2.5.3 of NIST NCSTAR 1-5A.

### 5.2.3 Timing of Key Events

It was important to assign times of known accuracy to assets included in the two image catalogs. This task was greatly complicated by the absence of accurate times for the majority of visual material collected. Chapter 3 in NIST NCSTAR 1-5A describes the difficulty of this task and the different ways in which times were assigned. Ultimately, a “boot strap” approach was adopted in which the impact of the aircraft on the south face of WTC 2 was assigned a time of 9:02:54 a.m., based on times for major events included in the earlier Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) report (McAllister 2002). Starting with imagery that included the aircraft impact, relative times could be assigned to photographs and images at other times by comparison to materials having known relative times. In this way, it was possible to work backward and forward from the second aircraft impact and assign times for visual material covering the period from the first aircraft impact on WTC 1 until the collapse of WTC 7. Assigned times, along with estimates of uncertainty, were included in the database.

To assist in the timing process, relative times for the five major events of September 11, 2001 - first aircraft impact, second aircraft impact, collapse of WTC 2, collapse of WTC 1, and collapse of WTC 7 - were determined with  $\pm 1$  s accuracies. These relative times appear in column 2 of Table 5-1. Note that the building collapse times are defined to be when the entire building was first observed to start to collapse. Specifically, in the case of WTC 7, the sinking of the east penthouse into the building before the main collapse started did not define the building collapse time.

The NIST time for the second aircraft impact was determined from four independent television video recordings to within  $\pm 1$  s. As a result, 5 s were added to times in the databases in order to report actual times.

The times listed for the major events in the FEMA report (McAllister 2002) were based on seismic signals (and analysis) recorded by the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO) of Columbia University at a location 21 miles from the WTC site in Palisades, New York. These signals have subsequently been reanalyzed by LDEO, under a contract from NIST (Appendix B). Further analysis of the seismic signals received resulted in slightly revised times for the major events. The results of this recent analysis are also included in the last column of Table 5-1. The uncertainty for the first aircraft impact on WTC 1, the collapse of WTC 2, and the collapse of WTC 1 were reported by LDEO to be  $\pm 1$  s, while that for the aircraft impact on WTC 2 is  $\pm 2$  s. Recalling that uncertainties for times of the major events based on the television broadcasts are estimated to be  $\pm 1$  s, it can be seen from Table 5-1

that the two aircraft impact times derived by NIST and LDEO now agree within the combined uncertainties.

**Table 5–1. Times for major events on September 11, 2001.**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Relative Time from Visual Analysis</b>	<b>NIST Time (Adjusted from Television Broadcasts)</b>	<b>Time Reported in the FEMA Study</b>	<b>Time Reported in LDEO Analysis (Appendix B)</b>
First aircraft impact	8:46:25 a.m.	8:46:30 a.m.	8:46:26 a.m.	8:46:29 a.m.
Second aircraft impact	9:02:54 a.m.	9:02:59 a.m.	9:02:54 a.m.	9:02:57 a.m.
Collapse of WTC 2	9:58:54 a.m.	9:58:59 a.m.	9:59:04 a.m.	9:59:07 a.m.
Collapse of WTC 1	10:28:17 a.m.	10:28:22 a.m.	10:28:31 a.m.	10:28:34 a.m.
Collapse of WTC 7	5:20:47 p.m.	5:20:52 p.m.	5:20:33 p.m.	5:20:42 a.m.

The times listed in Table 5–1 for the collapses of the two towers and WTC 7 that are based on the television records and the revised LDEO analysis differ by up to 13 s. The differences for the towers are due to different definitions used for the collapse times. The times based on visual analysis refer to the time when the collapse of a tower first became visually evident, while the times based on seismic records indicate the time when sufficient falling debris struck the ground to cause a seismic signal. The differences between the two times were estimated to be approximately 8 s for WTC 2 and approximately 12 s for WTC 1, based on videos of the collapses. When the times required for falling debris to reach the ground were subtracted from the LDEO times, the collapse times agreed within the reported uncertainties.

The relative time for the collapse of WTC 7 was estimated by NIST as follows. Figure 5–1 shows a long-distance photograph taken shortly after the east penthouse on the roof of WTC 7 began to sink into the building. As discussed in Section 5.7, this penthouse began to disappear into the building 6.9 s before the entire building began to fall. The camera used for this photograph recorded digital timestamps with the photographs. The photographer who shot the image took numerous photographs on September 11, including shots of the towers earlier in the morning. By using the tower shots, it was possible to accurately determine the difference between the timestamps and the relative time. When this difference was accounted for, the relative time for the photograph was calculated to be 5:20:41 p.m. The photograph was then compared with an untimed video clip showing the collapse of WTC 7. A frame taken from the clip is shown on the right side of Figure 5–1. The close agreement between the two images indicates the video frame was taken very close to the same time. In the video, the full collapse of WTC 7 started 6.2 s after the video frame shown in Figure 5–1, yielding the relative collapse time of 5:20:47 p.m.

The probable reason for the time difference between the NIST time and the LDEO result with regard to the collapse of WTC 7 is discussed in Appendix B. The seismic signal that was 10 s prior to the time derived from the television broadcasts was likely due to the falling of debris from the structural damage that preceded the descent of the east penthouse.

For this Investigation, the times used were those adjusted from the television broadcasts (column 3).



Figure 5–1. A photograph (top) and a frame from a video clip (bottom) showing the east penthouse of WTC 7 beginning to sink into the building.



## 5.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section provides nomenclature and information on local geography, wind direction, and WTC 7 design that will be useful for the detailed characteristics, analyses, and discussion that are presented in the following sections. The interdependence of these characteristics and the visual record is emphasized. Nomenclature that will be used in the remainder of the report is introduced. Most of the information related to WTC 7 is taken from design drawings.

### 5.3.1 Local Geography and Wind

Figure 5–2 is a map of the WTC complex and the immediate surrounding streets as they existed on the morning of September 11, 2001. Figure 5–3 indicates the location of the WTC complex on Manhattan, an island that forms one of the five boroughs of New York City.

As is evident in Figure 5–3, Manhattan is elongated with the upper end of the long direction aligned roughly to the northeast. Even though not strictly true, New Yorkers view Manhattan as running north-south, and areas uptown are considered to be located to the north. This nomenclature has been adopted for this report, so references are to the north and south towers, as well as the north, east, south, and west faces of WTC 7. For each of these cases, north refers to the building or the side that faces uptown. It should be kept in mind that the north face of WTC 7 was actually oriented roughly 29° clockwise from true north (NIST NCSTAR 1-2).

Figure 5–2 shows that WTC 7 was located just to the north of the main WTC site, separated from the main site by Vesey Street. The locations of two bridges, referred to as the Promenade and the Pedestrian Bridge, that crossed from WTC 7 to the main WTC complex are indicated. The four streets that surrounded the building were Vesey Street to the south, West Broadway to the east, Barclay Street to the north and the short section of Washington Street to the west.



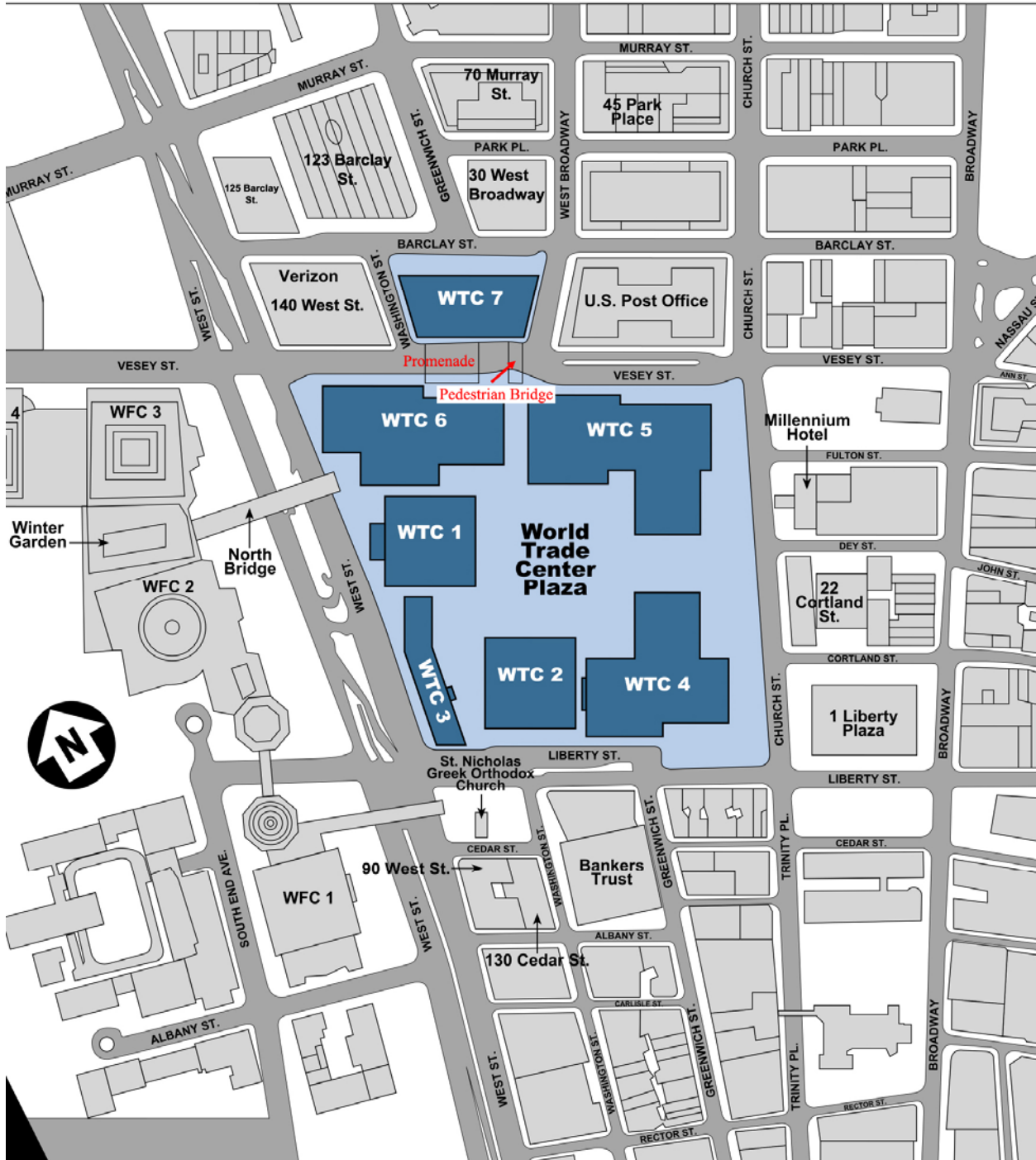


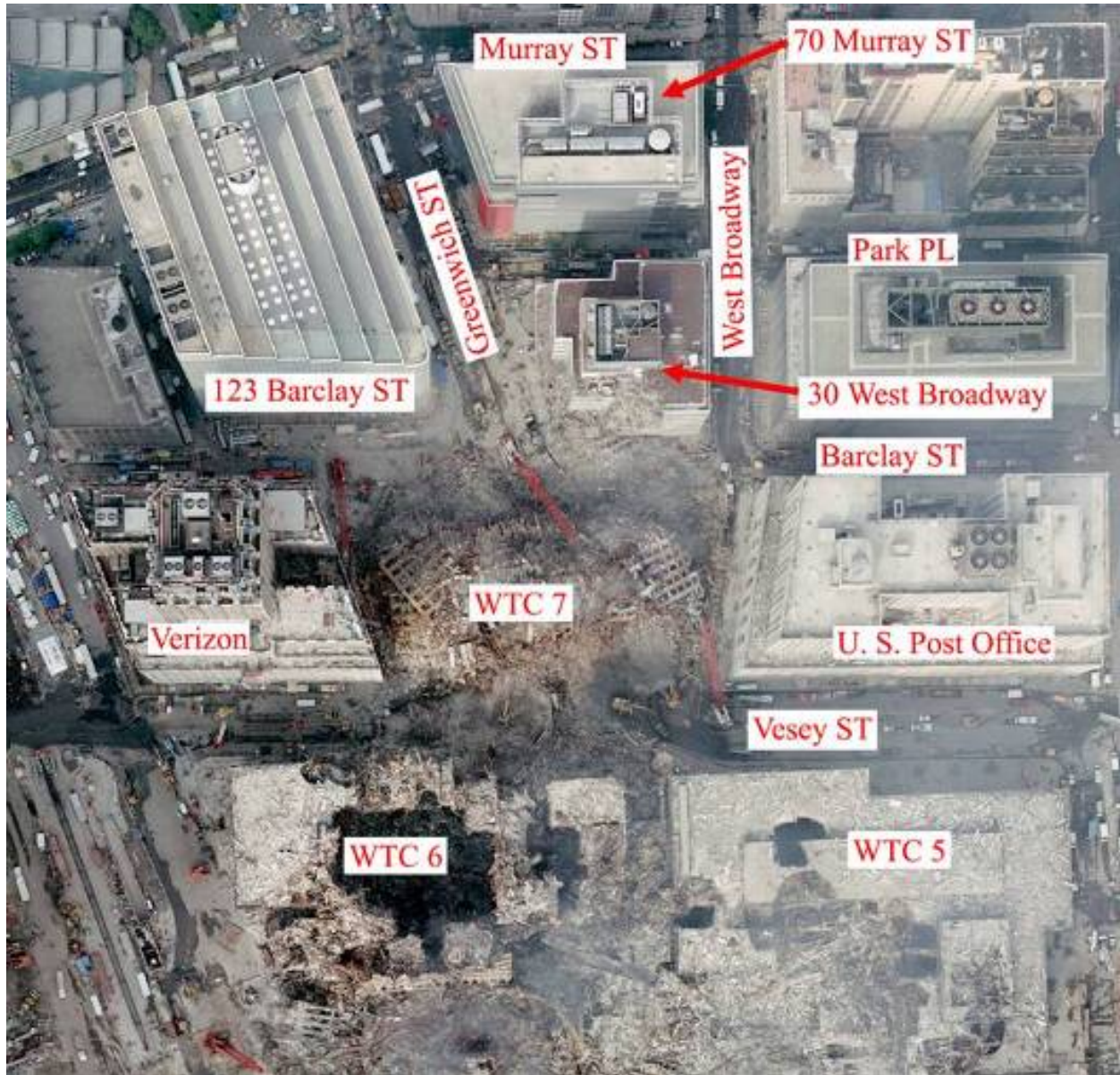
Figure 5-2. Map of the area of Lower Manhattan in the immediate vicinity of the WTC site.



**Figure 5–3. Map of the lower portion of Manhattan showing the location of the WTC complex relative to the island.**

WTC 7 was surrounded on four sides by other buildings. The locations of these buildings will be shown to play a critical role with regard to the details that can be gleaned from visual imagery concerning WTC 7 on September 11. The locations of these buildings are indicated on the map in Figure 5–2, and

they are identified also in Figure 5–4, which is taken from an aerial photograph shot on September 23, 2001, and Figure 5–5, which is another aerial view taken on September 11.

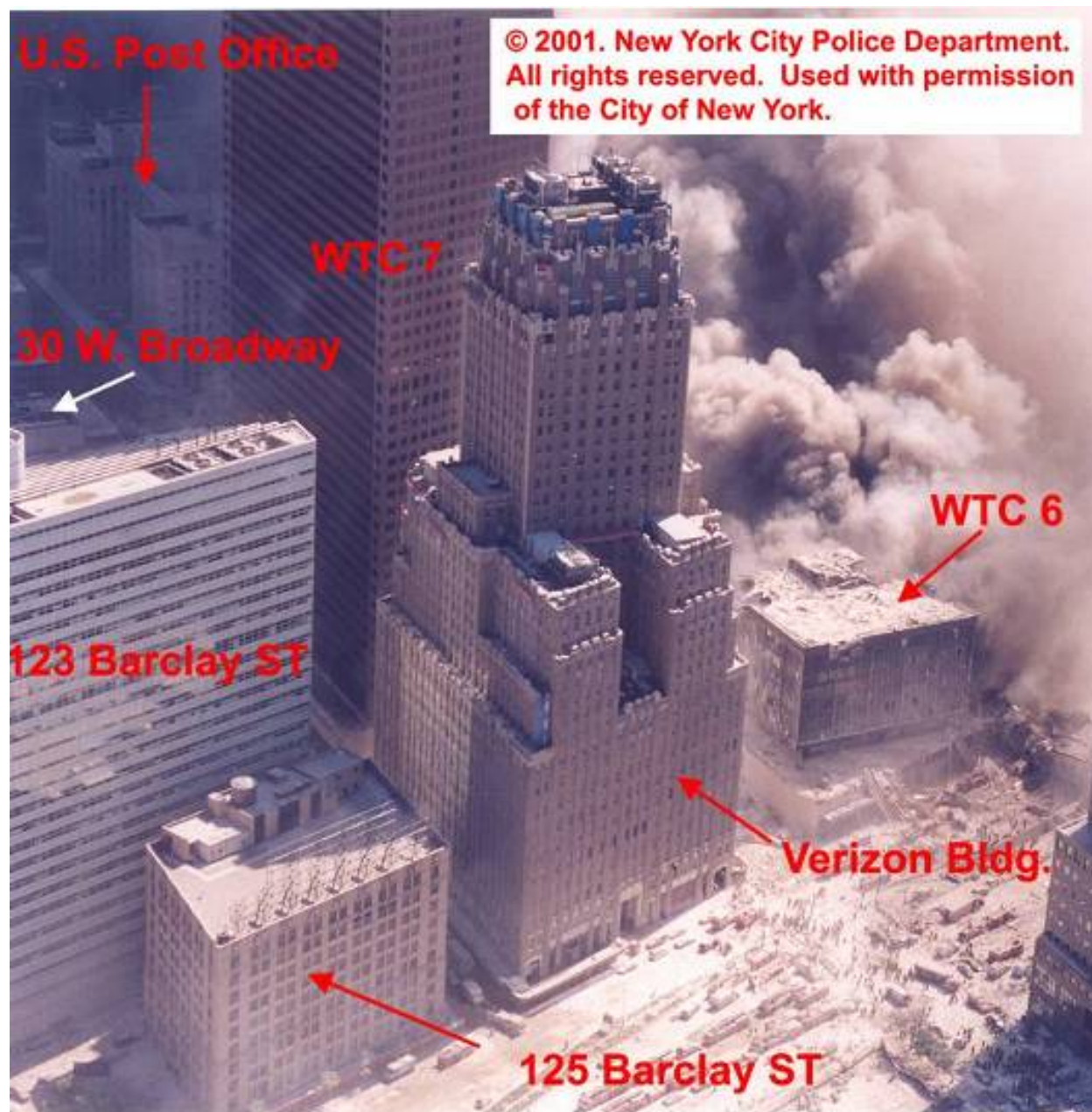


**Figure 5–4. Overhead view of the area in the immediate vicinity of the collapsed WTC 7.** This photograph was taken by a NOAA aircraft on September 23, 2001. It has been enhanced and labels have been added.

Two of the nearby buildings, WTC 5 and WTC 6, were located to the south across Vesey Street on the main WTC site. These buildings were nine and eight stories tall, respectively. The 15 story U. S. Post Office was located immediately to the east across West Broadway at 90 Church Street. There were two buildings to the immediate north of WTC 7. The one on the east side will be referred to as 30 West Broadway. It is also known as Fiterman Hall and is part of Manhattan Community College. It has 15 floors. The address of the building to the immediate north of 30 West Broadway is 70 Murray Street, and it has 13 stories. The building to the northwest of WTC 7 is located at 123 Barclay Street and has 26

stories. This building is easily identified by its stepped roofline. The 29 story Verizon Building was located across Washington Street to the west. Its address is 140 West Street.

From the overhead view of the area in Figure 5-4 and the angled view in Figure 5-5, it is clear how close the nearby buildings were to WTC 7. These buildings tended to block views of the lower floors of WTC 7 from all sides. In Figure 5-2 and Figure 5-4, it can be seen that Greenwich Street ran from the northwest and terminated near the center of the north side of WTC 7. This street ran straight for many blocks, and thus an observer along this street had a partial view of the lower sections of the north face.



**Figure 5-5. Photograph of WTC 7 and the immediate vicinity taken before noon on September 11, 2001.**

The original image has been cropped and labels identifying buildings have been added.

On September 11, 2001 the wind in New York City was primarily from true north. Rehm et al. (2001) used wind records recorded by aircraft in the New York City area on the morning of September 11, 2001 to estimate that the wind direction was from the north (within a few degrees) and had a speed between 11 mph and 22 mph at the heights (roughly 1,000 ft) where the aircraft impacted the towers. Similar information is not available for times following the collapses of the towers. However, the direction of the smoke plumes from fires burning on and near the WTC site indicates that the wind blew from roughly the same direction throughout the afternoon.

Wind behavior is strongly influenced by the presence of upstream structures. On September 11, the wind was coming from across the Hudson River. (See Figure 5–3.) Figure 5–6 shows a view of the WTC site shot from a helicopter around 10:21 a.m. from roughly the same direction that the wind was blowing. At this time WTC 2 had already collapsed and WTC 1 continued to burn. WTC 7 is indicated by an arrow. The lower portions of WTC 7 are at least partially shielded from the wind by buildings located between WTC 7 and the Hudson shoreline, while upper portions were directly exposed.



**Figure 5–6. Photograph of the WTC site taken around 10:21 a.m. from roughly the same direction as the wind was blowing on September 11. The image has been cropped and enhanced.**

As described in NIST NCSTAR 1-5A, the wind had a strong influence on smoke and dust flows around the towers. The wind also affected the behavior of flames and smoke flow from the towers. Similar effects will be described below for WTC 7.

### 5.3.2 WTC 7 Characteristics

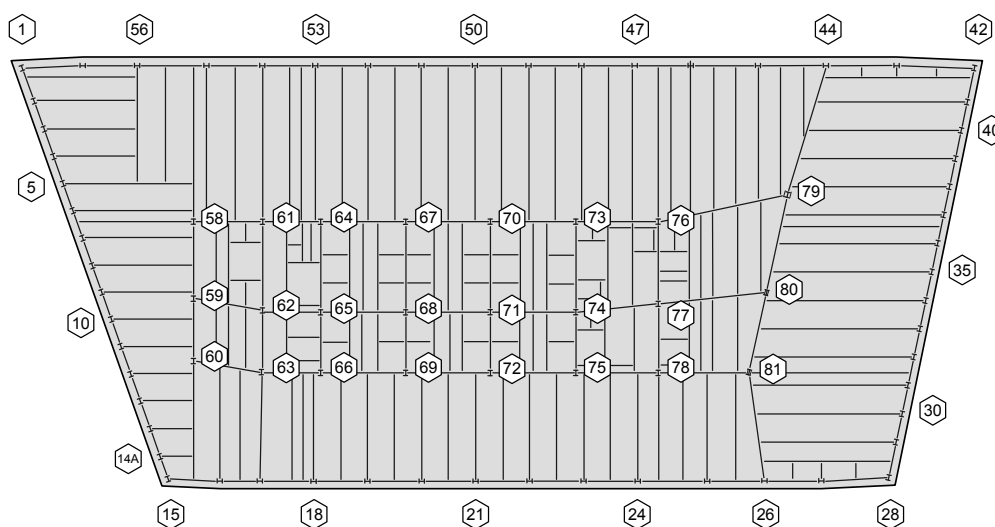
This section repeats some features of WTC 7 (more fully described in Chapter 2) that are needed to understand the visual observations. This section also introduces some of the nomenclature that will be used in later sections.

#### General Structure

WTC 7 was a 47 story office building whose height from the ground floor to its roofline was approximately 186 m (610 ft). The structure was built over an existing Consolidated Edison electrical substation. A series of transfer trusses and girders on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors transferred loads from higher stories to columns that extended to the ground. The upper part of the building had a trapezoidal shape. The south side was 75.2 m (247 ft), the east side was 45.0 m (149 ft), the north side was 100.3 m (329 ft), and the west side was 46.7 m (153 ft). On the north face, an approximately 278 ft wide, two story section of the substation extended outward an additional 42 ft along the base of the west wall.

Figure 5–7 shows the locations and numbers of the structural columns. Column numbers 58 to 78 formed a 15.7 m × 48.2 m (51.5 ft × 158 ft) rectangular core, consisting of a standard steel skeleton constructed from columns and beams. The long side of the core was oriented along the east-west direction. Note that the core was offset toward the west side of the building. Various building services, including mechanical and electrical systems, stairways, elevators, and restrooms, were located in the core columns. Columns 79, 80, and 81 provided additional support for the long floor spans between the east side of the core and the east face of the building.

The remaining 58 columns were located around the periphery of the building. These columns were numbered starting at the northwest corner and progressing counterclockwise around the building. There was a column 14A between column 14 and 15 on the west face. All of these columns were connected by steel wide-flange beams having nominal heights (which varied slightly with location) of 0.9 m (36 in.).



Source: McAllister 2002

Figure 5–7. Locations of columns and beams for a typical floor of WTC 7.

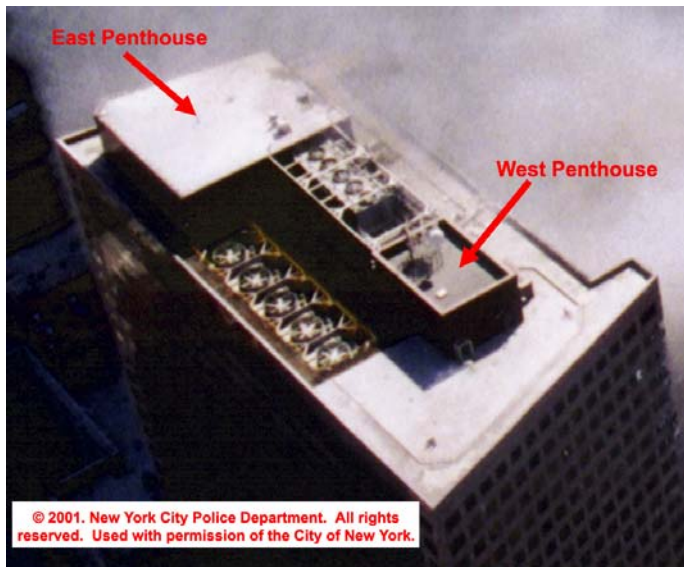
Portions of Floors 5, 6, 22, 23, 46, and 47 were dedicated to mechanical systems for the building. The tenant floors typically had a slab-to-slab spacing of 3.89 m (12 ft 9 in.). The spacings for mechanical floors varied between about 4 m to 4.5 m (about 13 ft to 15 ft).

On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors, there were air intake and exhaust vents. The locations and functions of these vents are discussed in Chapter 3.

There were also mechanical systems on the roof of WTC 7. Figure 5–8 and Figure 5–9 show two views of the roof taken on September 11. There were two fully enclosed structures on the roof which are referred to as the “east penthouse” and the “west penthouse.” Two parallel screenwalls ran between the two penthouses and formed an open area that held additional mechanical equipment. To the north of the enclosure, five cooling towers, which extended down to the 46<sup>th</sup> floor, are visible projecting through the roof. Note that a 1.3 m (4 ft) high parapet wall extended around the building above the roof.



**Figure 5–8.** Photograph taken from the southwest at 10:22:50 a.m. on September 11 showing the mechanical systems and penthouses on the roof of WTC 7.



**Figure 5–9.** Cropped photograph taken from the northwest around 12:00 p.m. on September 11 showing the mechanical systems and penthouses on the roof of WTC 7.

## Building Exterior

### *General*

The outward appearance of the building was determined by the covering, often referred to as a curtain wall, which was attached to the exterior steel frame. The curtain walls included glass that covered the windows. The curtain walls were held in place by supports attached to the steel. The primary materials used to form the outer curtain walls were polished finish granite sections, aluminum window frames, and glass.

The placement of the windows in conjunction with three colors of granite gave the WTC 7 its characteristic appearance. The window arrangements on the north and south faces were similar, but differed from those on the east and west faces. For a given face, the spatial arrangement of windows and granite was repeated on most of the floors. Variations were present on the lower floors, at the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> mechanical floors, and near the top on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors.

The 32 mm (1¼ in.) thick granite sections were attached to rectangular box structures, referred to as trusses on the building drawings, which were fabricated from 1.2 mm (0.048 in.) thick galvanized steel. These boxes had the same dimensions as the exterior granite plates and were 127 mm (5 in.) deep. The trusses were, in turn, attached by brackets to the steel framework. The centerlines for the exterior steel columns and beams were located 0.61 m (24 in.) inward from the outer part of the curtain wall. Window frames were also attached to the trusses.

### *North Face*

Figure 5–10 shows a partial view of the north face of WTC 7 taken on the morning of September 11 shortly after WTC 1 (the tower on the right) was struck by a jet airliner. The appearance of the north face is dominated by alternating reddish and darker-colored bands due to the granite facing and window glass, respectively. The light-colored areas at both ends were where tan granite was used.

An enlargement from Figure 5–10 of the lower portion of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–11. Floor numbers have been added. Floors 6 to 21 and Floors 24 to 44 had the same appearance.

Close inspection shows vertical lines running across the bands of window glass and granite. The bands are due to 76 mm (3 in.) wide window frames, which were aligned with the juncture of adjacent granite sections. In the contiguous center section, there are a total of 63 windows on a floor.

There are two additional, adjacent windows near the east and west edges of the building that are separated from the continuous section and encircled by tan colored granite plates.

Most of the windows on the north face had widths of 1.40 m (4 ft 7 in.), but some had slightly different values. The heights of the windows were 1.98 m (6 ft 6 in.), including the 76 mm (3 in.) wide frames at the top and bottom. The granite plates had heights of 1.87 m (6 ft 1¾ in.). When the 16 mm (5/8 in.) spacings at the top and bottom of the granite sections are added, the floor spacing of 3.89 m (12 ft 9 in.) is obtained. (The concrete floors were located behind the granite sections.) The distance between the top of a floor slab and the bottom of a window opening was 0.76 m (30 in.), and the distance between the top of a window opening and the base of the floor above was 1.15 m (3 ft 9½ in.). The nominally 0.9 m (36 in.)



high steel spandrel beams were located immediately below the floors. On the interior, there were typically false ceilings that ran to the top of the window glass. The glazing for the windows on these typical floors was 25 mm (1 in.) thick darkened, insulated glass panels.

The area at the top of the north face in Figure 5–10 has a difference appearance. This is the area of the mechanical spaces on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors. The darker area near the center is due to a series of adjacent vertical louvers through which air was fed to the cooling towers visible on the north side of the roof in Figure 5–9. The area to the immediate left of the louvers consisted of 17 glass sections. In the 10 sections to the immediate right of the louvers, the glass was backed by a closed wall. The remaining eight sections to the right were the same as the 17 sections on the left. On either end of the floors there were two adjacent windows separated from the contiguous central region by tan granite sections.



**Figure 5–10. Photograph of the north face of WTC 7, looking down Greenwich Street, shot at 8:55:01 a.m. on September 11.**

The WTC towers (WTC 1 on the right and WTC 2 on the left) are visible above WTC 7.



**Figure 5–11.**  
**Enlargement of a**  
**portion of Figure 5–10**  
**showing the lower**  
**floors of WTC 7.**  
 Floor numbers have been  
 added, and the image has  
 been enhanced.

The central part of the curtain wall at the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> floor had a similar appearance to that of the areas on either side of the louvers on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floor. This consisted of 2.64 m (8 ft 8 in.) windows above and below 1.91 m (6 ft 3 in.) glass panels.

In Figure 5–11, it is evident that the windows on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor had a different appearance than those on higher floors. This is because the windows contained louvers instead of glass (Chapter 4). These louvers are visible in Figure 5–12, which shows a view of the lower floors of the eastern edge of the north face. There is a large area of connected windows visible below the 5<sup>th</sup> floor louvers. These windows were on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors. Each of these windows consisted of three glass sections divided by frames in the vertical direction. The upper and lower sections consisted of 25 mm thick 1.83 m (6 ft) high insulating glass, while the center section was a 6 mm (¼ in.) thick, 1.98 m (6 ft 6 in.) high glass plate.

The white section of WTC 7, visible immediately below the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, is the eastern end of the substation that housed the Con Edison transformers. To the immediate left of the substation is an opening for the underground ramp that led to a truck loading dock under the main WTC complex. There is an entrance doorway to the immediate left of the ramp entrance that is not visible in Figure 5–12. There was a second entrance doorway near the center of the north face.



**Figure 5–12. Photograph of the east side of the north face of WTC 7.**  
The original photograph was cropped, and the intensities were adjusted.

For later image analyses, it will be necessary to be able to identify individual windows on various floors of the building. A nomenclature has been adopted in which windows are designated based on their location relative to the exterior steel columns of WTC 7. On the north face, these columns are numbered from 42 to 1 (Figure 5–7) going from left to right as viewed from outside. On this face, three to five windows are located to the right of a given column. Using design drawings and images, a properly scaled

façade drawing for the north face has been created and is shown in Figure 5–13. The numbers on the left side of the drawing indicate floors. Each number is associated with a short line that shows the location of the floor slab for that particular floor. The locations of columns across the face are indicated by numbers placed above the windows on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. The windows associated with a given column are those to the immediate right. By using the general notation  $x$ - $yz$ , where  $x$  represents a floor,  $y$  a column number, and  $z$  the letter for a particular window, it is possible to identify any window on the face. As examples, the leftmost window on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor is identified as 7-42A, the 14<sup>th</sup> window from the left on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor is denoted 15-44E, and the rightmost window on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor is 30-57C.

### ***South Face***

Figure 5–14 is a cropped photograph, taken from near the corner of Liberty Street and Church Street on the morning of September 11, that shows the upper portion of the south face of WTC 7. Floor numbers have been added for reference. The two buildings in the foreground are WTC 4 and WTC 5. These buildings block views of WTC 7 below the 20<sup>th</sup> floor from this direction and demonstrate how difficult it was to record images of the lower parts of this face of WTC 7.

The general appearance of the south face of WTC 7 for Floors 7 to 45 was the same as the north face. (Compare Figure 5–14 with Figure 5–10 and Figure 5–11.) There are continuous sections of windows in the center with reddish polished granite spandrel covers above and below. On either edge of the center section windows, there are two windows framed by an area of tan colored granite.

Even though the appearances of the two faces were similar, details concerning column and window placement differed. There were 45 contiguous windows in the center area of the south face, as contrasted with the 63 contiguous windows per floor on the north face. The dimensions of the windows were the same as on the north face, although, again, there was some modest variation in the width of some of the windows.

The south side of the top two floors (46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup>) can be seen in Figure 5–8. The center area corresponding to the contiguous window locations on other floors is recessed inward. There is a narrow roofline at the base of the 46<sup>th</sup> floor that is connected to the top edge of the roof parapet by a sloping curtain wall. The recessed area is also visible at the top of WTC 7 in Figure 5–14. In Figure 5–8, it can be seen that the sloping curtain wall was broken into vertical four glass sections separated by frames.

The eastern edges of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> floors are just visible in Figure 5–14. The central window region has the same appearance and composition as the corresponding floors on the north face, with a dark horizontal band and two somewhat lighter bands immediately above and below.





**Figure 5–14. Photograph showing upper portions of the south and east faces of WTC 7, taken from near the corner of Church Street and Liberty Street on September 11 at 9:51:45 a.m.** The two buildings in the foreground are WTC 4 (left) and WTC 5 (right). Floor numbers have been added, and the image was cropped and enhanced.

Figure 5–15 and Figure 5–16 show views of the lower floors of WTC 7 on the south face. The two story black area is a series of louvers located on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. These louvers line up with the continuous sets of windows in the center parts of the higher floors. The louver heights were 6.07 m (19 ft 11 in.). Recall that on the north face, louvers were only present on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor and had a different appearance. (See Figure 5–12.) Unlike the higher floors, there were no openings on these floors at the east and west edges of the south face. There was a two story generator vault located behind these louvers on the west end of the south side of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. To the east, a series of transformer vaults ran along the south wall of the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Associated electrical equipment was located above each of these vaults on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor.

In the area visible between the Promenade and Pedestrian Bridge there was a four story high lobby that can be seen clearly in Figure 5–15. The area was enclosed in clear glass, and it is possible to see the columns and spandrels through the windows in Figure 5–15. The four columns visible between the two



**Figure 5–15. Photograph of a portion of the lower floors of WTC 7 on the south face.**

It was shot from across Vesey Street between the Promenade on the left and the Pedestrian Bridge on the right.



**Figure 5–16. Photograph showing the lower southeast corner of WTC 7.**

bridges are numbered 23 to 26. A number of revolving and swinging doors entering the lobby are visible on the first floor. Figure 5–16 also provides good views of the pedestrian bridge and south face entrances.

Entrances onto the Promenade and the Pedestrian Bridge were located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Areas above the Promenade were also enclosed in clear glass on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors. Column 22 is visible through the window above the Promenade in Figure 5–15. The clear glass on these floors extended as far west as column 16. The area above (to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor) and below the Pedestrian Bridge was also enclosed by clear glass. A small section of column 27 is visible above and to the right of the Pedestrian Bridge in Figure 5–15. The glass on the east side extended just beyond column 27.

Access from Vesey Street to a two story high loading dock for WTC 7 was located under the Promenade between columns 16 and 22. Six large doorways with rollup doors provided this access. One of these doorways is visible in Figure 5–17. Additional doorways were located between the columns visible to the left of the image. The round columns were outside of WTC 7 and provided support for the Promenade.



**Figure 5–17. Frame from a video showing one of the doorways located below the Promenade that led to the WTC 7 loading dock located on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. The image has been enhanced.**



Figure 5–18 shows a side view of the Promenade looking east along Vesey Street. This image was taken around 10:15 a.m., between the times when WTC 2 and WTC 1 collapsed. The Promenade extended a distance of 37.8 m (124 ft) between columns 16 and 23 on the south face of WTC 7. It was enclosed on either side by transparent walls that ran from WTC 7 across to WTC 6. The walls on the east side are visible in Figure 5–15, and those on the west side can be seen in Figure 5–18. The large red object visible on the Promenade in Figure 5–15 is a sculpture that was located near the northeast corner.



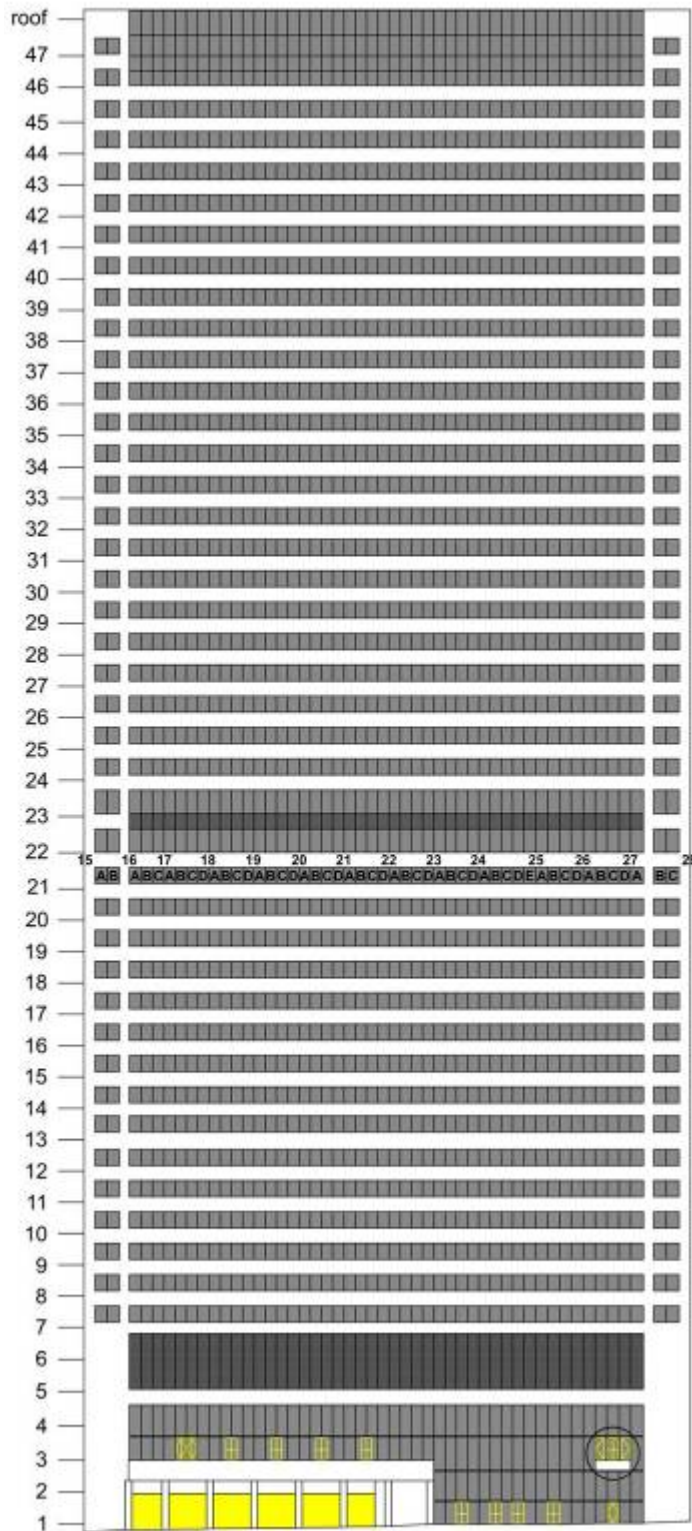
**Figure 5–18. An image from a video, shot from Vesey Street and looking toward the east, shows the south face of WTC 7 and the Promenade crossing over to WTC 6. The video was recorded around 10:15 a.m. on September 11. The intensity levels of the image have been adjusted.**

The Pedestrian Bridge was located near the east edge of the south face. Figure 5–16 shows this bridge prior to September 11. Figure 5–19 shows a view of the bridge taken from a video shot on September 11 shortly after the collapse of WTC 1 from another angle. The bridge was tubular in shape with a diameter of 6.7 m (22 ft) and was centered to the left of column 27. The top of the tube was supported by a series of ribs and was transparent. The sides were open.



**Figure 5–19. Image of the Pedestrian Bridge taken from a video shot shortly after the collapse of WTC 1 from near the corner of West Broadway and Vesey Street. The buildings across Vesey Street are WTC 5 (left) and WTC 6 (right). The image intensity has been adjusted.**

A properly scaled drawing of the south façade of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–20.



**Figure 5–20. Façade graphic of the south face of WTC 7.**

Floor numbers are indicated with the lines representing the slab locations. Column locations are indicated by the numbers at the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. Individual windows are identified by the nearest column to the immediate left and the corresponding letters.

While not shown explicitly, the locations of the Promenade and Pedestrian Bridge are apparent at the base of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Using the same notation as for the north face, floor numbers and slab locations are indicated. As above, windows are identified by the nearest column to the immediate left and a letter representing the location of the window relative to the column position.

### ***East Face***

As noted earlier, the east and west faces of WTC 7 had appearances different from the north and south faces. Figure 5–21 shows an image of the east face of WTC 7, in which the upper floors are visible. Instead of the distinct alternating color pattern apparent on the north and south faces, the east face had a waffle appearance. This pattern was created by using 1.83 m (6 ft 0 in.) square sections of 25 mm (1 in.) thick insulated window glass with 76 mm (3 in.) wide frames (total width 1.98 m, 6 ft 6 in) surrounded by sections of tan granite panels. On each floor, the openings at the north and south edges, each containing two windows, were somewhat wider (2.6 m, 8 ft 6 in.) than the central 12 windows. This configuration was repeated on Floors 7 to 49 with the exception of Floors 22 and 23, where the window heights were increased by 50 percent to 2.90 m (9 ft 6 in.), including the 3 in. wide frame.

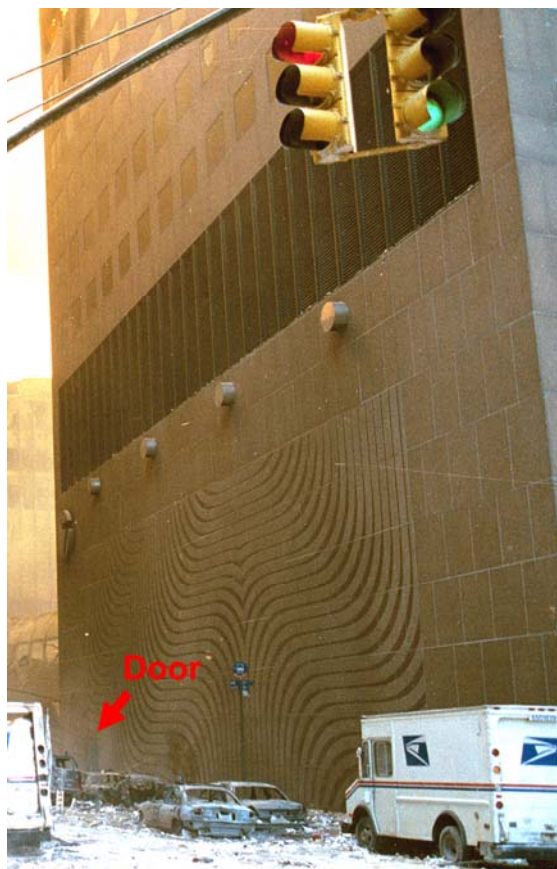


**Figure 5–21. Cropped photograph shot from near the corner of Broadway and Frankfurt Street showing the upper floors of the east face of WTC 7.**

Floor numbers have been added. The building on the far side of WTC 7 is the Verizon Building. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

A photograph of the lower floors of the east face of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–22. A partial view from the other end of the face is shown in Figure 5–16. The lowest row of windows with glass is on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. Immediately below these windows there is a span of black louvers that were located on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. As described in Chapter 3, these louvers were connected to a pair of two story plenums that provided air intake and exhaust for diesel-powered generators for electrical power backup. Below the 5<sup>th</sup>

floor, there were no other openings on the east face, with the exception of two doors located at the ends of the three story mural that ran for a length of 33 m (108 ft 2 in.) and was centered on the face (Figure 5–16 and Figure 5–22). The northern door, hidden behind the mail truck in Figure 5–22, provided access to an exterior store room behind the wall, while the southern door accessed a stairwell that connected to the first four floors.



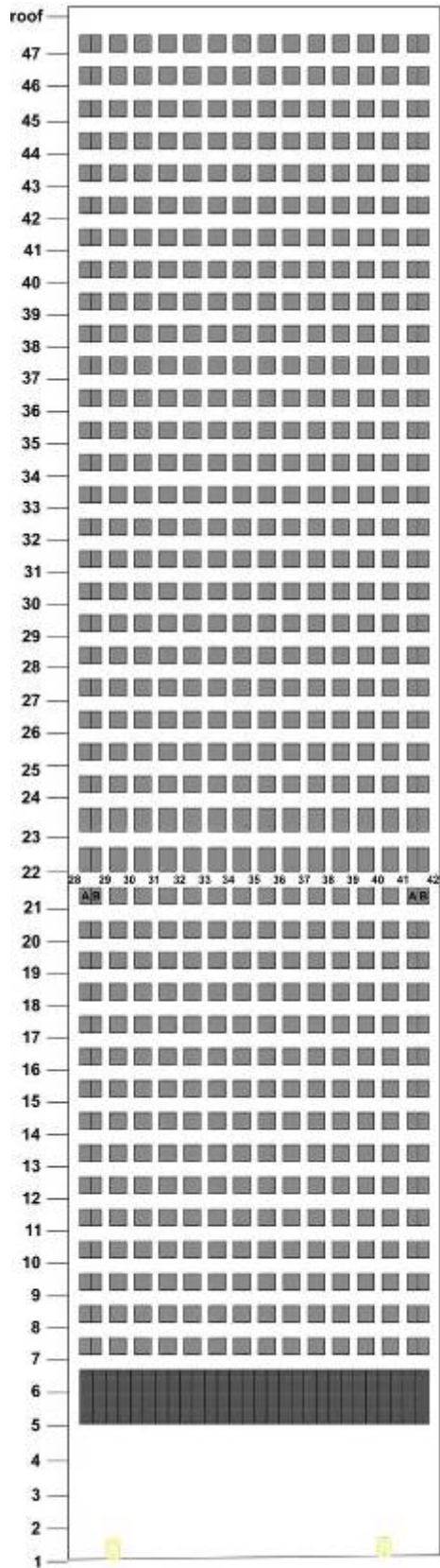
**Figure 5–22.** Cropped photograph of the lower portion of the east face of WTC 7, taken shortly after 2:00 p.m. on September 11<sup>th</sup> from near the corner of Barclay Street and West Broadway. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

**Source:** George Miller, New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA)

Figure 5–23 shows a façade drawing of the east face of WTC 7. The numbers indicate floor slab and column locations. Since only single windows are present to the left of columns 29 to 40, it is not necessary to use letters to identify these windows. The pairs of windows on either end of a floor are identified using “A” and “B.”

### ***West Face***

A view of the upper floors of the west face of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–24. The face has a waffle-like appearance that is similar to the east face, and the 12 windows between the window pairs on either end were configured identically to those on the east face. However, on the north edge of the west face, there was one pair of windows with the same dimensions as the pairs on the north and south edges of the east face, and on the south edge of the west face, there were two adjacent two-window groupings. The left hand pair of these windows had a width of 2.74 m (9 ft 0 in.), and the right hand pair width was 3.35 m (11 ft 0 in.). The arrangement of windows visible in Figure 5–24 was repeated as far down as the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, except for the windows on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> floors. These were the same as on the east face.



**Figure 5–23. Façade graphic of the east face of WTC 7.**

Floor numbers are indicated with the lines representing the slab height. Column locations are indicated by the numbers at the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. Individual windows are identified by the nearest column to the immediate left and the corresponding letters.

Figure 5–25 shows a view of the lower part of the west face of WTC 7. This photograph was taken on September 11. There is considerable collapse debris in the street (Washington Street) next to the building, and some damage is evident on the face. The appearance of the lower six floors differs considerably from that for the east face. (See Figure 5–16 and Figure 5–22.)



**Figure 5–24. Cropped photograph of the west face of WTC 7 shot from West Street between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on September 11.**

The structure on the left is the Verizon Building, and the building just visible at the bottom is WTC 6. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

**Figure 5–25. Cropped photograph showing the lower floors of the west face and a small section of the north for WTC 7, taken on September 11 sometime after 12 p.m.**

The light area in the upper left-hand corner was in shadow, and the intensity has been adjusted to make it more visible.



George Miller/NYCTA

The two story high extension that covered the substation (discussed earlier) stands out at the base of the northwest corner. A portion of the louvers for the westernmost transformer vault on the north side is visible on the north face. On the main portion of the west face, the two lower rows of windows that span the full face are on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. While not evident from the angle of Figure 5–25, these openings contained louvers that connected to a pair of two story high plenums that served as air intakes and exhausts. On higher floors, there were isolated windows that also contained louvers instead of glass.

In Figure 5–25, three large windows divided into  $3 \times 6$  sections are visible. These windows were located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors. Each measured 4.50 m wide  $\times$  6.07 m high (14 ft 9 in.  $\times$  19 ft 11 in.). These windows were open to the outside and covered with bird screen. They opened into a four story space that contained two Con Edison transformer vaults. Just below these windows, two louvered sections were located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. These louvers were raised slightly off of the ground and extended across the same width as the three windows above and were 5.89 m (19 ft 4 in.) tall. These louvers provided access to and ventilation for the two transformers that were located behind. The area visible to the left of the louvers on the first floor was a rollup door that provided access to the Con Edison space. There was a small louvered area at the base of the second floor above this door.

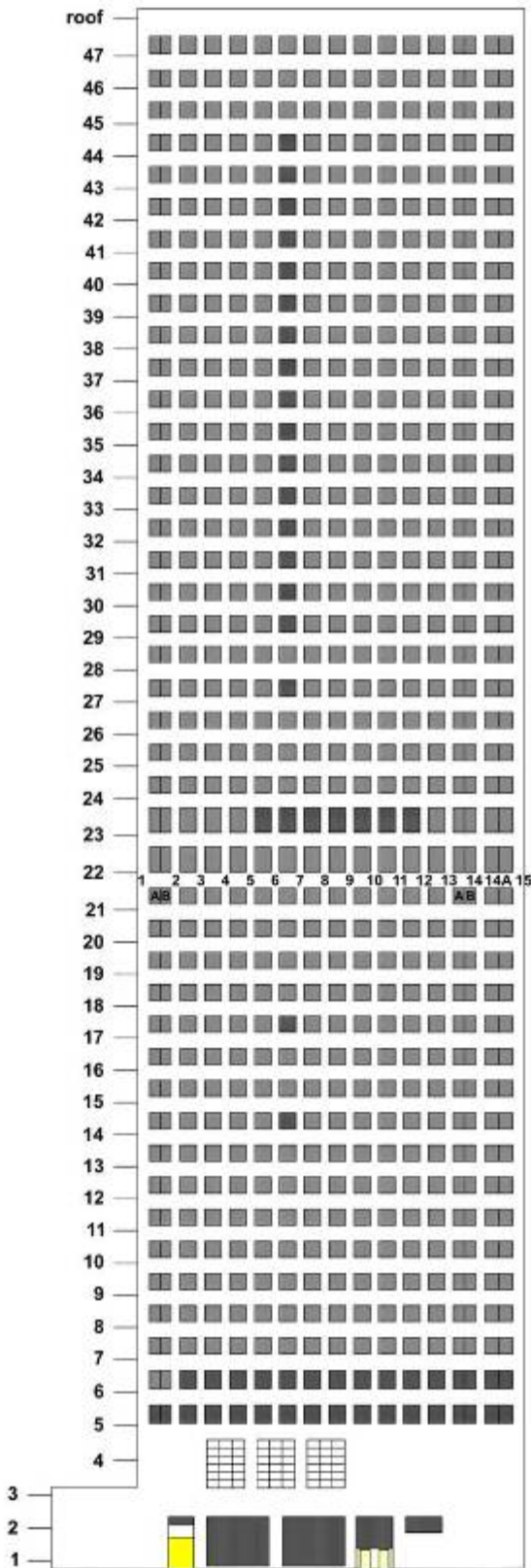
To the immediate right of the large ground floor louvers, an area is visible on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor where the granite cladding has been knocked off. Immediately below the damaged area there is a set of inactive vertical louvers. Immediately below these louvers, there was a 2.49 m (8 ft 2 in.) high vestibule with two entry doors. The doors led to a stairway that provided employee access to the 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> floors.

There is an additional opening visible in Figure 5–25 further to the right of the ground floor vestibule and louvered area. This was an area of active louvers located at the base of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. These louvers opened to a plenum that extended upward to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor slab. The plenum served a small mechanical equipment room in the southwest corner of this floor.

Figure 5–26 is a façade drawing for the west face of WTC 7. Similar to the drawings of the other faces, the locations of floors are indicated by the lines on the left side and the locations of perimeter columns by the number above the windows on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. Windows are identified by the column numbers to the immediate left. For most locations there were only single windows to the right, and no additional window identifiers are required. There were two windows to the immediate right of column 1 and column 13, and these are denoted by “A” and “B” as shown.

Note that column 1 to column 13 and column 15 were located behind polished granite column covers, but that column 14 was located behind the right hand edge of window 13B, and column 14A was behind both window 14 and window 14a. This arrangement differs from the east face, where all columns were placed behind granite covers.

Another feature of the west face that differed from the other faces was the presence of louvers on nonmechanical floors. In façade drawings, the louvered windows are indicated by a darker shade of gray than was used to indicate window glass. For nonmechanical floors, where present, the louvers were located in window 6.



**Figure 5–26. Façade graphic of the west face of WTC 7.**

Floor numbers are indicated with the lines representing the slab locations. Column locations are indicated by the numbers at the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. Individual windows are identified by the nearest column to the immediate left and the corresponding letters.



## 5.4 VISUAL IMAGERY AVAILABILITY FOR WTC 7 DAMAGE AND FIRE CHARACTERIZATION

### 5.4.1 Overview

There was a period of nearly seven hours between the WTC 1 and WTC 7 collapses. The availability of imagery of the lower 13 floors of WTC 7, where most of the structural damage and fire activity occurred, was sporadic and variable over this period. The images that were available provided sufficient information to guide the reconstruction of the WTC 7 collapse. However, the degree of detail was less than that for the WTC towers.

### 5.4.2 Limitations of Imagery

#### Obstructed View

As shown earlier in this chapter, views of the lowest 13 floors from any distance beyond the immediate vicinity were generally blocked by nearby buildings. The principal exception was the lower portion of the north face, which was observable looking down Greenwich Street. Views of the lower floors elsewhere were only available from locations very close to WTC 7 or from overhead.

#### Dust from the Collapse of the WTC Towers

When WTC 2 collapsed at 9:58:59 a.m., the situation around the WTC complex completely changed. The collapse generated a huge dust cloud that, due to its high density, spread much like a liquid around the buildings of Lower Manhattan. An image of this cloud taken nearly four minutes after the collapse is shown in Figure 5–27. In the immediate aftermath it was not possible to see WTC 7. Thousands of people rapidly fled the area. As a result, the amount of collected imagery shot from the vicinity of the WTC site abruptly dropped when WTC 2 collapsed. Due to the prevailing wind, the dust cloud around WTC 7 began to clear by around 10:15 a.m. and some nearby imagery of WTC 7 was recorded during the period between the collapse of WTC 2 and the collapse of WTC 1 at 10:28:22 a.m.



**Figure 5–27. Cropped photograph showing the dust cloud created by the collapse of WTC 2.**

The image was shot from the west at 10:03:56 a.m. WTC 7 can barely be seen above the cloud. The intensity levels of the photograph have been adjusted.

The dust cloud generated by the collapse of WTC 1 further blocked views of the WTC site, and the second collapse created additional confusion and panic as people continued to stream away from the site. The collapses of the towers created extremely difficult conditions around the WTC site. Large amounts of tower steel and façade debris were on the ground; several buildings were heavily damaged; numerous fires were ignited in debris piles, vehicles, and nearby buildings; and a large number of people, including emergency responders, had been killed. As a result of these conditions, very little imagery taken from near WTC 7 has been identified for roughly an hour following the collapse of WTC 1, even though some long range imagery showing the upper floors of WTC 7 is available.

### **Smoke Obscuration**

The earliest views of the south face available following the collapse of WTC 1 show large amounts of smoke obscuring the face. This smoke was present at later times as well. It was not clear whether the smoke was coming from lower locations within WTC 7 or was from fires near WTC 7 whose smoke was being drawn into a low pressure area formed on the face due to the flow of the prevailing wind from the north around the building. (Similar effects of the wind caused partial obscuration of the east and south faces of WTC 1 prior to its collapse, as discussed in NIST NCSTAR 1-5A.) The presence of this smoke further limited clear views of the south face.

### **Limited Site Access**

During this first hour following the collapse of WTC 1, emergency responders, some ordinary citizens, and professional photographers and film crews began to work their way slowly back to the WTC site. As a result, starting around 11:00 a.m., limited imagery of the lower floors of WTC 7 was taken. Also starting around this time, police helicopters with photographers aboard approached the site, and some photographs were taken showing the lower floors of WTC 7 from above. Television news helicopters were an extremely valuable source of footage of the towers, but they provided only limited helpful imagery of the lower floors of WTC 7 after the towers collapsed. Even before WTC 1 collapsed, news helicopters had been ordered to hover several miles from the WTC site. From this distance, they could not observe the lower floors of WTC 7. A no-fly policy was being implemented across the nation, and early in the afternoon, most news helicopters were required to land. The last helicopter news footage of the site was recorded from across the Hudson River at around 3:23 p.m.

During the early period following the tower collapses, the area in the immediate vicinity of the WTC site was not secured, and photographers were apparently able to approach relatively freely. However, as time passed and emergency responders became better organized, a perimeter was established several blocks from the site, and access was controlled. Many people within the perimeter without a clear reason for being there were asked to leave.

FDNY communications from the early afternoon of September 11 show that commanders were concerned about a possible collapse of WTC 7 due to damage that it suffered from falling debris and the fires that were beginning to grow within the building. (See Chapter 6.) Orders were given for FDNY personnel to pull back from the immediate vicinity around mid-afternoon.

As a result of these conditions, only a limited number of photographers and videographers were able to approach WTC 7 closely enough to obtain imagery of the lower floors after 11:00 a.m. Very little imagery was collected showing the lower 13 floors during the last hour or so before WTC 7 collapsed.

### **Rubble from the WTC 1 Collapse**

The southern face of WTC 7 was located approximately 110 m (370 ft) from the base of WTC 1. (See Figure 5–2 for orientation.) When this tower collapsed, it deposited a large pile of debris on Vesey Street in front of WTC 7 and along the east side of the south face of the Verizon Building. These piles of debris hindered approach to WTC 7 along these streets. As a result, it was very difficult to even reach a position with a clear view of the lower floors of the WTC 7 south face.

The collapse of WTC 1 also deposited a significant amount of debris on Washington Street between WTC 7 and the Verizon Building. Scaffolding that had been on the Verizon Building was dislodged and was also piled in the street. The debris limited access to the west side of WTC 7, and most available views of the lower floors of this face were taken from near the corner of Washington Street and Barclay Street.

### **Vehicle Fires**

Shortly after the collapse of WTC 1, a large number of vehicle fires grew on West Broadway between Park Place and Vesey Street. While these fires temporarily limited access to WTC 7, they were extinguished fairly early, and it later became possible to enter this area, since there was very little heavy debris between WTC 7 and the U.S. Post Office. Several photographers and videographers managed to work their way up West Broadway as far as Vesey Street.

### **Fires in WTC 7**

Around 2:00 p.m., fires broke out on the east side of WTC 7, and it became dangerous to be on the street below due to falling glass and the intensity of the fires. People were moved up West Broadway to at least its intersection with Barclay Street. Some views of the lower floors burning on this face were taken from here. In general, it was possible to move along Barclay Street behind WTC 7, and limited imagery is available showing close-ups of the lower floors of the north face of WTC 7. It certainly became less safe to move along this street when fires appeared on the north face around 3:00 p.m.

#### **5.4.3 Timing and Coding of WTC 7 Visual Information**

Once the photographs and videos had been acquired and cataloged (NIST NCSTAR 1-5A and Section 5.2 of this report), it was necessary to assign times to them. The process used was similar to that for the more numerous images available for the WTC towers, although the limited available imagery made it more challenging to time the images and to develop a full time line for the fire behavior in WTC 7.

A portion of the imagery of WTC 7 was shot in digital formats that provided timestamps. For some of these, cameras times could be accurately determined, since their clocks could be tied to events that occurred before WTC 1 collapsed. These images provided a limited number of views of WTC 7 at well defined times. There were also larger numbers of photographs and videos taken at times that could not be

precisely determined, either because there were no timestamps or, if timestamps were available, the actual clock time was unknown. Timing of these images was difficult due to the limited amount of material with known times available for comparison. In many cases, it was necessary to estimate times for such imagery based on such general characteristics as the locations of fires in windows or the locations of shadows on buildings. Such estimates were often subject to substantial uncertainties. In the following discussion, estimated uncertainties are included when times are indicated.

The approach for characterizing the fire development and spread in WTC 7 was also similar to that used for the towers. The presence or absence of fire, whether or not smoke was coming from windows, and whether ventilation pathways were open or closed were the three properties used to characterize fire behavior. As discussed below, observations related to smoke flow and the presence of fire were broken into broad classes of smoke flow rate and fire intensity. Windows were characterized as open or closed. Note that these three properties are not independent. For example, smoke flow generally occurs from open windows, and it is possible for smoke to hide an underlying fire from view.

The key in Figure 5–28 was used as the basis for the window-by-window assessment of fire behavior. The results were coded in three separate data sheets using Microsoft Excel. Floor and window locations were identified using the numbering system described in Section 5.3.2 and shown in Figure 5–13, Figure 5–20, Figure 5–23, and Figure 5–26. Separate files containing the three data sheets were generated for each face of WTC 7 and time analyzed.

The first sheet characterized the observed fire condition:

- If a particular window could be observed, and no flame was visible, it was assigned a “0.”
- If a small, isolated fire was present, it was identified as a “spot fire” and assigned a value of “1.” A spot fire was gently burning, indicative of relatively low heat release.
- If a larger fire covering two or more contiguous windows was visible through the window, and flames were not coming out of the window, the fire was identified as “fire visible inside” and assigned a value of “2.”
- If flames were coming out of the window, the fire was identified as “external flaming” and assigned a value of “3.”
- There were many instances where the fire condition could not be determined for a given window for a variety of reasons, including smoke obscuration, insufficient image resolution, or lack of a suitable image for analysis. These windows were assigned values of “9.”

Figure 5–29 shows a portion of such a data sheet, describing fires on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:13 p.m. Floors are indicated by the column of vertical numbers along the left-hand edge of the worksheet in blue, and window locations are indicated by the upper two horizontal rows of numbers and letters at the top. The assignments are based primarily on the photograph of the north face shown in Figure 5–30.

The second worksheet was used to identify whether smoke was flowing from a window.













- If no smoke was observed, the window was assigned a “0.”

- If a light smoke flow was observed, it was assigned a “1.” Light smoke generally flowed from the very top of a window and was often light in color.
- If heavy smoke was observed, it was assigned a “2.” A heavy smoke flow filled a larger fraction of a window and was often dark in color.
- If a particular window could not be observed, the worksheet cell was assigned a value of “9.”

While these designations are qualitative in nature, in practice, consistent ratings were provided by a number of individuals who participated in the generation of the data sheets.

The third worksheet described the condition of windows and required fairly close-up imagery.

- If the window glass was broken out, it was assigned a value of “0.”
- If the glass was intact, it was assigned a value of “1.”
- If a given window could not be observed, it was assigned a value of “9.”

KEY FOR ANALYSIS			
Sheet #1: Fire Visible			
0	No fire		(white)
1	Spot fire		(yellow)
2	Fire visible inside		(red)
3	External flaming		(orange)
9	Not visible		(blue)
Sheet #2: Smoke			
0	No smoke evident		(white)
1	“Light smoke”		(gray)
2	“Heavy smoke”		(black)
9	Not visible		(blue)
Sheet #3: Windows			
0	Window open		(white)
1	Window glass intact		(gray)
9	Not visible		(blue)

**Figure 5–28. Key used to describe observations with regard to fire, smoke, and window breakage in spreadsheets for individual windows in WTC 7.**

The color codes used to represent the data in façade maps are shown to the right.

While the data sheets captured the behavior of the fires, it proved difficult to use them to track changes without visualizing the results. An approach based on the Excel worksheets was used for rapid visualization. Cell backgrounds and contents were color coded in such a way that they provided an indication of the spatial distribution of the parameter of interest. Figure 5–31 shows an example based on the fire spreadsheet shown in Figure 5–29.

	A	Y	Z	AA	AE	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL
1															
2		47													
17	38	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
18	32	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
19	31	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
20	30	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
21	29	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
22	28	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
23	27	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
24	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
33	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
34	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
35	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
37	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
38	12	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
39	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
40	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
42	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
43	7	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	2
44	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
45	5	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
46	4	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
47	3	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
48	2	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
49	1	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

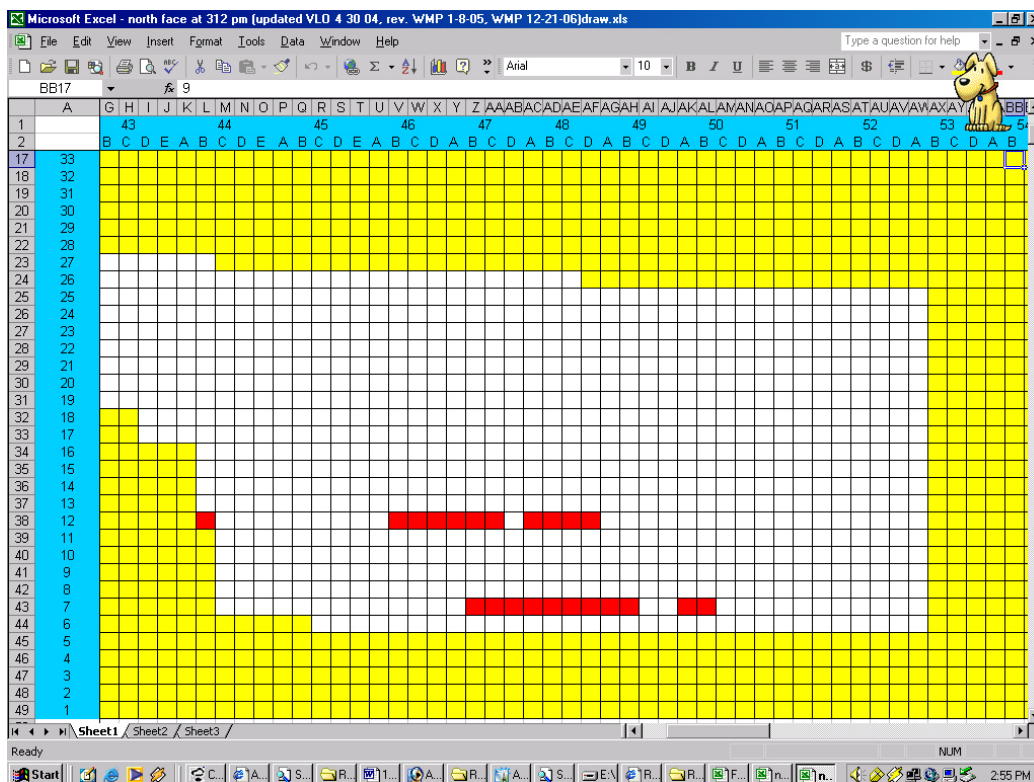
**Figure 5–29. Portion of the spreadsheet describing fires on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:13 p.m.**

The numbers at the left refer to floors, and numbers and letters at the top are column numbers and associated windows, respectively.



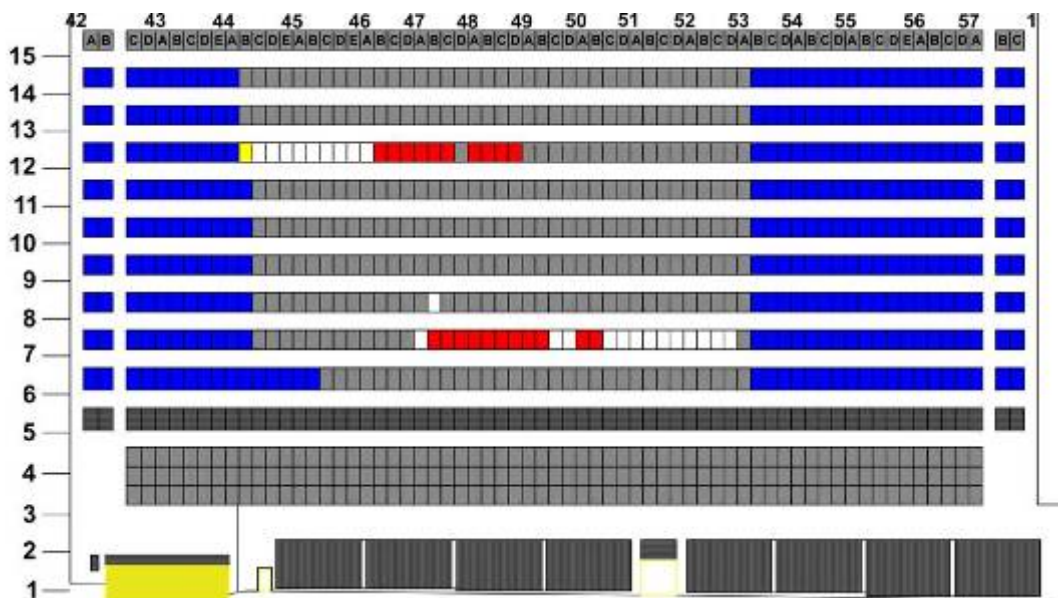
**Figure 5–30.** Photograph showing the north face of WTC 7 around 3:13 p.m. on September 11. Floor numbers have been added, and the image intensity has been adjusted.

For this report, clearer visualizations were prepared using the scaled drawings of the WTC 7 faces shown in Figure 5–13, Figure 5–20, Figure 5–23, and Figure 5–26. Since the severe fire activity was observed on the lower floors, the drawings were usually cropped to display the lower 14 floors, and the column numbers and window indicators were included on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor. The information was color coded using the key included in Figure 5–28. Figure 5–32 shows an example of a map that combines datasheet results for windows and fires based primarily on the image in Figure 5–30. Individual windows were treated such that if a fire was present or if a value could not be assigned, the color code corresponding to the assignment in the fire spreadsheet was displayed. Otherwise, the color corresponding to the code for the window spreadsheet was used.



**Figure 5–31** Screen capture of a data spreadsheet visually representing the fire condition on a portion of the north face of WTC 7 at 3:13 p.m., based on the spreadsheet shown partially in Figure 5–29.

Cell backgrounds and numbers are color coded as follow:  
 “0”—white, “1” to “3”—red, and “9”—yellow.



**Figure 5–32.** An example of a façade map with combined data from fire and window datasheets for the north face of WTC 7 at around 3:13 p.m.



## 5.5 DAMAGE ESTIMATES FOR WTC 7 DUE TO DEBRIS IMPACT FROM WTC 2 AND WTC 1 COLLAPSES

### 5.5.1 Damage Resulting from the Collapse of WTC 2

WTC 2 began to collapse at 9:58:59 a.m. It took roughly 11.5 s for the first large debris to reach the ground. Videos and photographs taken from a variety of directions show that most of the heavy debris came down around WTC 2 and did not reach out as far as WTC 7, which was located 215 m (710 ft) from the north face of the tower. An indication of the relative distance between WTC 2 and WTC 7 can be seen in Figure 5–33, which shows the collapsing WTC 2, WTC 1 to its left, and WTC 7 near the left edge. Heavy debris can be seen falling around the base of WTC 2 that is far removed from WTC 7. Additional supporting evidence that large and heavy debris did not reach WTC 7 from the collapse of WTC 2 is that the roofs of WTC 5 and WTC 6, which were in between WTC 2 and WTC 7 did not sustain substantial damage based on review of photographs and videos taken from above these buildings after the collapse of WTC 2, but prior to the collapse of WTC 1. Note that a large section of WTC 4, which was located to the south of WTC 5 and was immediately to the east of WTC 2, was collapsed by debris falling from WTC 2.

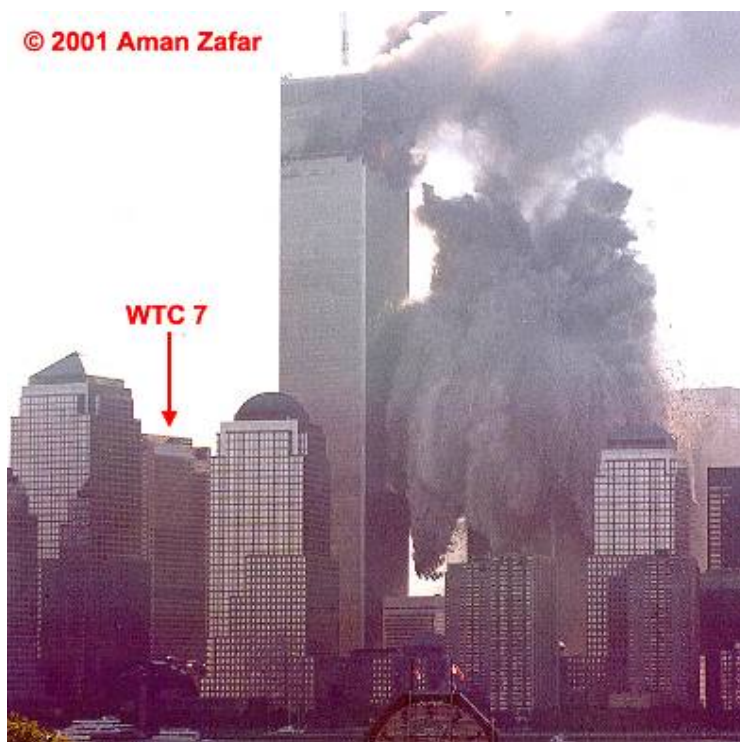
The large dust cloud generated by the collapse of WTC 2 was described earlier and can be seen in Figure 5–27. This dust cloud was pushed out rapidly from the base of WTC 2. A long distance video shot from the west indicates that the first part of the cloud reached the south face of WTC 7 about 12.5 s after the collapse of WTC 2 started. The dust cloud can be seen pushing up against WTC 7 in Figure 5–34, which was taken about 16 s after WTC 2 started to collapse. The dust cloud visible between WTC 7 and the building to the west of WTC 1 (World Financial Center 2) obscures the lower 15 floors of WTC 7. The dust cloud, visible as a reflection from the south face of the building, is roughly 40 stories high.

Another view of the dust cloud is shown in Figure 5–35, which was taken looking up Fulton Street from just east of Broadway. The building visible below the dust cloud is WTC 5. The Verizon Building is just visible beyond WTC 7.

For several minutes following the collapse of WTC 7, NIST found no images showing the south face of WTC 7. However, after the dust had cleared and several minutes prior to the collapse of WTC 1, a camera crew turned the corner at West and Vesey Street, proceeded east on Vesey Street to one of the ground floor entrances, entered the ground floor lobby, and proceeded up an escalator to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor main lobby, before retracing their steps and leaving the area. Much of their progress was taped.

A frame taken from this video is reproduced in Figure 5–18. Even though the street is passable, a large amount of dust and small debris, such as paper, has been deposited on the street. The trees on the Promenade are upright and appear unharmed. Windows on several floors above the Promenade appear to be intact.

Another frame from this video taken closer to WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–36. The amount of dust and debris is greater than seen further west on Vesey Street. It appears to be several inches deep. Most of the debris appears to be paper. A portion of the south face of WTC 7 is visible to the left. Numerous plate glass windows at the ground floor are broken out between column 24 and column 26. There appears to be some light façade damage higher up near the Pedestrian Bridge. There is no indication of any structural damage on WTC 7. The covering on the Pedestrian Bridge appears to be intact following the collapse of WTC 2. There are no indications of fire in the image.



**Figure 5–33. Photograph of the collapse of WTC 2 taken at 9:59:07 a.m.** (with an uncertainty of 2 s). An arrow has been added to identify WTC 7. The original image has been cropped and the intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–34. Photograph of the collapse of WTC 2 taken at 9:59:15 a.m.** (with an uncertainty of 5 s). An arrow has been added to identify WTC 7. The original image has been cropped and the intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–35. Cropped photograph showing the dust cloud from the collapse of WTC 2 approaching the south face of WTC 7, taken from just east of the corner of Fulton Street and Broadway at 9:59:24 a.m. (estimated uncertainty of 5 s). The intensity levels have been adjusted.**

A closer view of the broken windows on the ground floor of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–37. A broken window is apparent above the door on the right side. An enclosed column, 25, is visible near the center of the image. It is clear that this column was undamaged at this time. The deep piles of dust and light debris have been pushed through the broken windows at the base. As the videographer entered the 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby, the video shows that the entire floor was also covered by a thick layer of dust and light debris.

The main entry lobby for WTC 7 was located on the south side of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. The videographer went up a nonoperating escalator from the ground floor lobby to this area. Emergency alarms were sounding and emergency lighting seemed to be operational. On the east side of lobby, there was heavy dust and light debris, as can be seen in Figure 5–38, which shows the rear corner of the lobby that was roughly 20 m (60 ft) across from the revolving door that opened onto the Pedestrian Bridge. (See Figure 5–20.) The large amount of debris suggests that windows were also broken out at this level, even though there are no images that confirm this.



**Figure 5–36. Frame from a video filmed just outside of WTC 7 looking east up Vesey Street around 10:15 a.m.**

WTC 7 is on the left, the U.S Post Office is straight ahead across West Broadway, and WTC 5 is visible behind the Pedestrian Bridge on the right. The intensity levels have been enhanced.

On exiting the building, the videographer again shot the interior of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby. Figure 5–37 shows a view looking across the four story high lobby from the northwest towards the southeast. Some of the broken windows in the south face are visible. Columns 24 to 27 are visible, and it is clear that they have not sustained significant damage.



**Figure 5–37. Video frame showing the ground floor of the south face of WTC 7, taken around 10:15 a.m.** The column visible near the center is the base of column 25. The intensity levels have been enhanced.



**Figure 5–38. Video frame showing a corner of the main lobby on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the south side of WTC 7, taken around 10:15 a.m. The intensity levels have been enhanced.**

**Figure 5–39. Video frame looking across the 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby on the south side of WTC 7, taken around 10:15 a.m. The intensity levels have been enhanced.**



The Investigation database does not contain images showing the appearances of the other three faces of WTC 7 during the time between the collapses of the two towers. As shown below, images shot after the collapse of WTC 1 indicate that there was no significant damage on the east and north faces of WTC 7, and, therefore, none had been caused by the WTC 2 collapse. Following the collapse of WTC 1, damage was observed on the west face of WTC 7. However, since this face was shielded from the debris-laden flow generated by the first collapse, it is almost certain that this damage resulted from the collapse of WTC 1.

The available imagery suggests that, while the dust cloud and light debris that reached WTC 7 from the collapse of WTC 2 was sufficient to break out windows that were directly impacted, the material lacked sufficient momentum to cause any significant structural damage. The absence of visible smoke and fire makes it likely that no fires were ignited in the building as a result of the collapse of WTC 2.

## 5.5.2 Damage Resulting from the Collapse of WTC 1

### The Collapse of WTC 1

WTC 1 began to collapse at 10:28:22 a.m. The collapse was captured in numerous videos and photographs. Videos indicate that it took roughly 10 s for the first debris to reach the ground. Figure 5–40 shows a series of six pairs of images taken during the collapse of WTC 1 from just west of north (cropped photographs) and from just north of west (frames from a video shot from a helicopter). The paired images are coincident in time to within 0.06 s. In the photographs from the north, WTC 7 is immediately in front of WTC 1 and is partially obscured by a water tank on top of a closer building. WTC 7 is indicated by an arrow in the video frames.

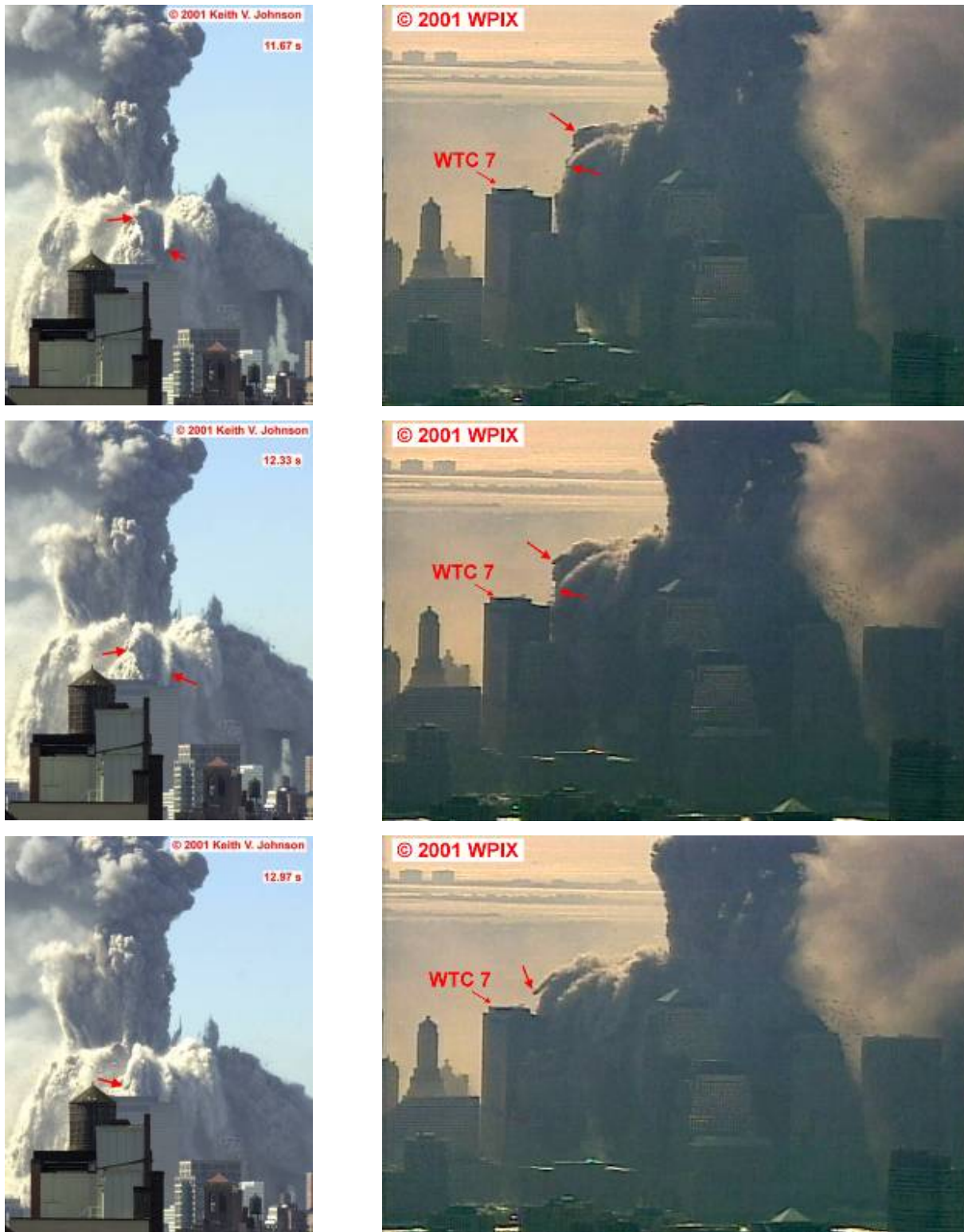
The video frame taken 6.50 s after the collapse started shows that the initial large debris created by the collapse fell close to the outer wall of WTC 1. As the collapse continued, the debris extended further outward from WTC 1, but the west view shows that the majority of the debris was still falling well away from WTC 7 10.63 s after the collapse began and 0.5 s after the first debris reached the ground. However, starting around this time, several substantial pieces of debris were expelled outward toward WTC 7 from the main cloud of the falling material. The first of these is visible in the images taken at 10.63 s (marked with arrows). Several of these pieces appeared to arc downward toward the south face of WTC 7.

In the images taken at 11.67 s, the arc (marked with arrows) formed by the initial ejected building section is distinct in both views. In the north photograph, this falling debris is visible above WTC 7 just to the right of the west penthouse. An additional piece of debris (also marked with arrows) is just beginning to emerge from the cloud. The western view at 12.33 s shows that the arc from the initial ejected debris is approaching WTC 7. The additional debris to the left and above has fully emerged and is moving outward from the main debris cloud. By 12.97 s, the later ejected material (marked with arrows) has formed a distinct arc as seen from the west, and appears just above the west penthouse in the corresponding photograph from the north.



**Figure 5–40. A series of cropped photographs shot from the north and frames from a video shot from the west show the collapse of WTC 1.**

Times are relative to the start of collapse. The intensities of the video frames have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–40. (continued).** A series of cropped photographs shot from the north and frames from a video shot from the west show the collapse of WTC 1.

Times are relative to the start of collapse. The intensities of the video frames have been adjusted.



Figure 5–41 provides additional comparisons of north and west views of the collapse of WTC 7. The north views are taken from a video that was shot from much closer to WTC 7 than that shown in Figure 5–40. The west views are taken from the same video as in Figure 5–40. The first pair shows frames taken 10.43 s after the start of the collapse of WTC 1. This is just prior to the time for the third image pair shown in Figure 5–40. Arrows mark the same locations in the north and west views. Close inspection shows that the ejected debris appears as a dark planar object that is long in one direction and narrow in the other. As discussed in NCSTAR 1-5A, the exterior walls of the towers were constructed from preassembled steel panels consisting of three story columns joined by spandrels to form a 3.0 m wide  $\times$  11.0 m high (10 ft  $\times$  36 ft) wall section. These exterior panels were bolted together to form the exterior walls. When the towers collapsed, the walls tended to break along the bolt lines, thus creating large pieces of debris consisting of one or more panel sections. The appearance of the falling object in Figure 5–41 suggests that it was formed from at least one panel section.

The next pair of images was recorded 12.17 s after the collapse started. The arcing path formed by the object observed at 10.43 s is visible from both directions (marked with arrows), even though the object itself has moved behind WTC 7 by this time in the north view. Note that this object appears to have passed behind WTC 7 at a location roughly halfway between the end of the west penthouse and the edge of the building. The two arrows to the left in the north view indicate additional objects that are just beginning to emerge from the dust cloud. These objects are also visible in the west view. The upper object is the same as observed for the three latest times in Figure 5–40. It ultimately formed the distinct arc seen in the images taken at 12.77 s that seemed to travel further outward. The videos show that the debris marked by the lower arrows in the images taken at 12:17 also arced downwards and had apparently disappeared behind WTC 7, just to the west of the building center, by 12.77 s.

An aerial view from the northeast, showing the falling debris from WTC 1 with WTC 7 in the foreground, is shown in Figure 5–42. This photograph was taken about 14 s after the start of the collapse, or just over one second after the last pairs of images in Figure 5–40 and Figure 5–41. Arrows have been added indicating the three arcs generated by debris ejected from the primary debris cloud. Comparison with videos shows that these arcs resulted from the same material as those marked with arrows in Figure 5–40 and Figure 5–41. In this photograph, the easternmost arc, which was generated by the highest debris in the earlier photographs, appears to be approaching WTC 7 just west of the building center, while the westernmost arc seems to have passed just to the west of the building. In Figure 5–40 and Figure 5–41, the arcs appeared to be located slightly further east. This difference is mostly likely associated with parallax effects due to the relative locations of the cameras and the debris at the times the images were recorded.



**Figure 5–41. Three pairs of frames taken from videos shot from the north and west, showing the collapse of WTC 1.**  
 Times are relative to the start of the collapse. Arrows indicate large objects that were projected toward WTC 7.  
 The intensities of the video frames have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–41. (continued). Three pairs of frames taken from videos shot from the north and west showing the collapse of WTC 1.**

Times are relative to the start of the collapse. Arrows indicate large objects that were projected toward WTC 7. The intensities of the video frames have been adjusted.

The positions of the debris relative to WTC 7 are more accurately indicated by Figure 5–42, since it was shot looking down on the scene at a time when the debris was closer to WTC 7.



**Figure 5–42. Aerial photograph shot 14 s  $\pm$  0.5 s after WTC 1 began to collapse.**  
Arrows mark arcs formed by debris that seemed to be ejected outwards from the debris cloud.

It is difficult to get an idea of the sizes of some of the falling debris from WTC 1 based on the images shown thus far. The following photographs provide a better indication. Figure 5–43 shows a photograph

that was taken from just north of due west about 7.3 s after the collapse started. This is shortly after the second pair of images shown in Figure 5–40. WTC 7 is indicated. The building visible between WTC 1 and WTC 7 is the Millennium Hotel, and the taller building in the foreground on the right is World Financial Center 3. (See Figure 5–2 for locations.) A large piece of falling debris is visible. The image has sufficient resolution to identify the individual columns and spandrels that formed the external wall of WTC 1. This particular piece appears to be at least two panel sections high and six panel sections wide, corresponding to about 18 m × 18 m (60 ft × 60 ft).



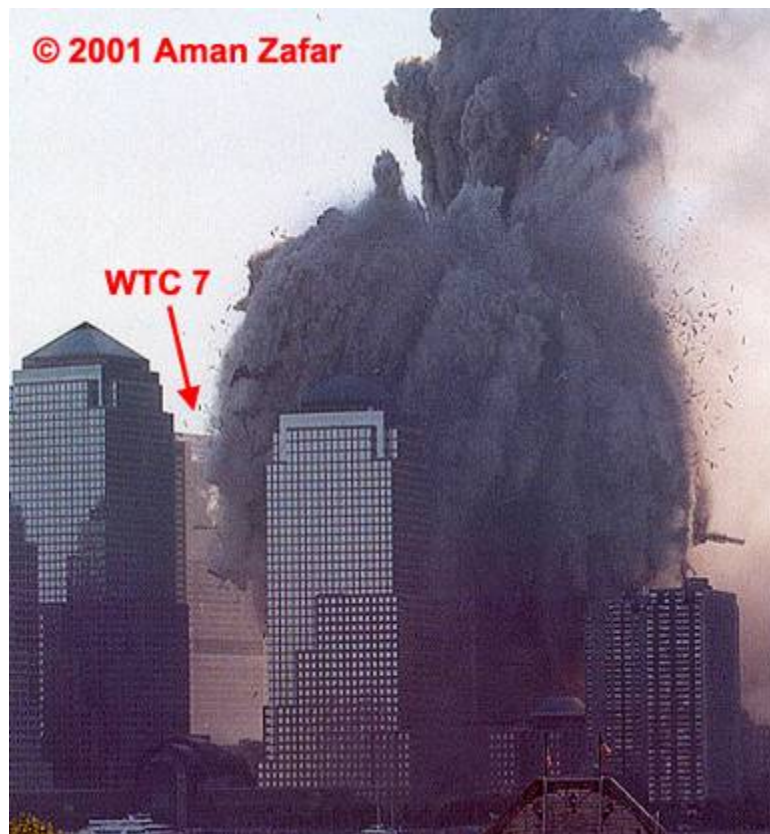
**Figure 5–43. Cropped photograph showing the collapse of WTC 1, taken from just north of west of the WTC site 7.3 s ± 0.2 s after initiation of the collapse.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted.

A view of the collapse from a different perspective is shown in Figure 5–44 which was shot from the southwest and provides a view of the south face of WTC 7. This image was taken 10.6 s following the start of the collapse. This is very close to the time of the third pair of images in Figure 5–40, which were taken at 10.63 s. Note that the falling debris visible in Figure 5–44 is still relatively far removed from the south face of WTC 7. Large sections of steel are visible in the falling debris on both sides of WTC 1.

Figure 5–45 is a high resolution photograph of the collapse of WTC 1 taken 11.7 s after initiation. This is very close to the time when the fourth pair of images in Figure 5–40 were taken and between the times for the first and second pairs of images in Figure 5–41. This is around the time when the large pieces of debris were expelled toward WTC 7. The section of this photograph above WTC 7 is enlarged in Figure 5–46. Several large sections of steel are visible. On the right side of the photograph, a falling piece of WTC 1 wall is visible that is at least three panel sections wide and two high. There is another large portion of exterior steel frame visible immediately above WTC 7 just to the right of the west penthouse. It is difficult to make out the individual columns and spandrels, but this piece appears to be roughly the same size as the one further to the right. Comparison with videos shows that this large steel section was

the first large debris that was ejected from the dust cloud toward WTC 7. Its trajectory, visible in Figure 5–40 and Figure 5–41, suggests that it may have reached the south face of WTC 7.



**Figure 5–44. Cropped photograph showing the collapse of WTC 1, taken from southwest of the WTC site 10.6 s ± 0.2 s after the collapse initiated.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted.

When the photograph in Figure 5–45 was taken, pieces of debris were also appearing from the dust cloud higher up and to the east of the large steel section. (See the fourth pair of images in Figure 5–40 and the second pair in Figure 5–41.) In Figure 5–46, it is apparent that several other large pieces of debris were present in this area. The highest piece visible was ejected the furthest and formed the distinct arc visible in the last image pairs of Figure 5–40 and Figure 5–41. As noted above, the large debris below the highest piece was also thrown toward the south face of WTC 7 on a somewhat lower trajectory.

A large amount of smaller debris is visible outside of the primary debris field in Figure 5–46. Their size and shape suggest that many of these smaller pieces are individual 3.6 m (12 ft) long aluminum cladding that covered the outer steel skeleton of the towers. These are described in NIST NCSTAR 1-5A. The opacity of the dust cloud created by the collapse of WTC 1 is also evident in the photograph.

The imagery of the collapse of WTC 1 indicates that the vast majority of debris fell relatively close to the tower and did not impact WTC 7 directly. However, there were at least a few substantial pieces of the exterior steel frame that were expelled far enough to impact the south side of WTC 7. A substantial amount of dust and small debris is likely to have struck the south face.



**Figure 5–45. Photograph taken from the north of WTC 7  $11.7 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after WTC 1 began to collapse.**



Figure 5–46. Enlarged section of Figure 5–45 focused on the area above WTC 7.

#### Damage to Floors 5 through 19 on the South Face of WTC 7

The clearest shot showing WTC 7 south face damage available to the Investigation is shown in Figure 5–47. It was taken shortly after 1:30 p.m.

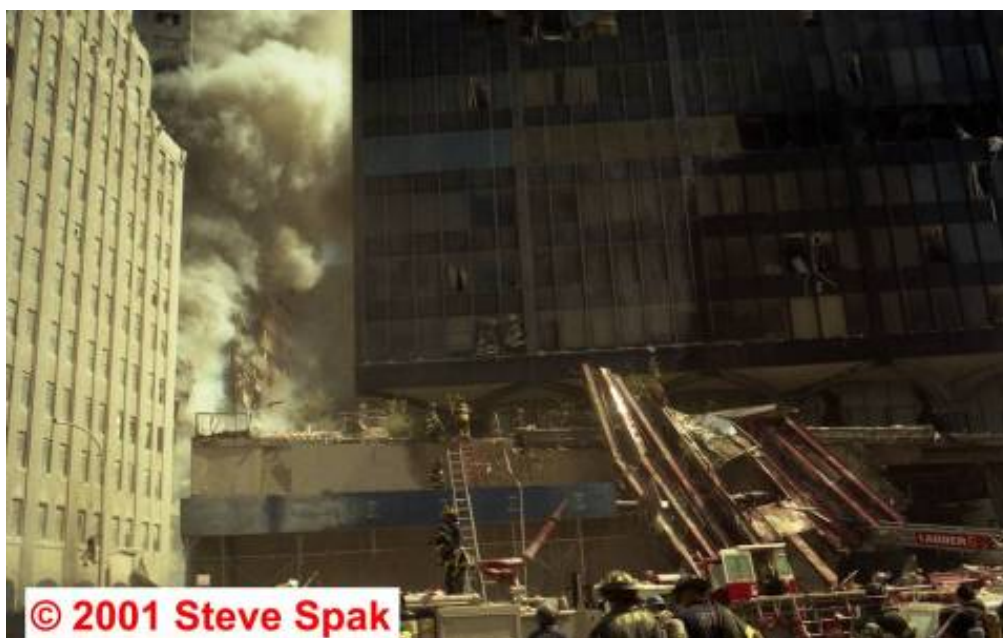


Figure 5–47. Photograph showing a portion of the south face of WTC 7, taken just after 1:30 p.m.

The intensity levels have been adjusted, and auto contrast was applied.



This photograph was shot from West Street just to the south of its intersection with Vesey Street, looking toward the southwest corner of WTC 7. The building on the left is the Verizon Building, and WTC 6 is on the right. The southwest corner of WTC 7 is visible immediately above the Verizon Building. The three windows visible above the smoke on the west face are on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor through the 21<sup>st</sup> floor. A smoke trail partially obscures the windows immediately below. Note that WTC 6 is built on a raised foundation that blocks most of the width of the lower floors on the south face of WTC 7 from view.

A damaged area is visible on the south face of WTC 7, and an opening has been created on the left side of the visible part of the face. Heavy smoke appears to be coming from this opening. A closer inspection shows there is an area to the right where the alternating spandrels and windows, characteristic of the south face (see the earlier discussion), are visible. A series of white vertical lines are also present. These lines reveal the locations of the steel columns that were located along the south periphery of the building, immediately behind the windows. These columns appear white because of their enclosures.

This photographer also recorded a short video segment of the south face from near the same location at roughly the same time as the photograph in Figure 5–47. As the smoke rolled across the south face in the video, additional areas on the south face (primarily on the east side) were momentarily revealed. Figure 5–48 shows a frame taken from this video. By appropriate scaling (the video has much lower resolution) and rotation of such frames, it was possible to obtain good overlap of the captured video frames and the image shown in Figure 5–47.



**Figure 5–48. Frame taken from a video recorded shortly after 1:30 p.m., showing a partial view of the south face of WTC 7.**

There was sufficient information in the photograph and video frames to determine locations visible on the face and to prepare an overlay showing floor and column locations. This task was complicated by the strong perspective distortion due to the sharp angle from which the images were taken. The first step was to obtain an estimate of locations on the face using information available in the images. As noted above, the west edges of the 19<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup> floors are visible in Figure 5–47. Several floors can be seen in the photograph and video that are located well below these floors. By recognizing that all of these floors have the same height and correcting for image parallax effects, the row of windows visible above the raised foundation of WTC 6 was tentatively identified as being located on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor.

In Figure 5–47, the four sets of columns to the immediate right of the damaged area have roughly the same spacings, but the distance to the next set of columns appears to be somewhat larger. In fact, the spacing between columns 24 and 25 was about 1.8 m (5 ft 10 in.) larger than the spacings between columns 21, 22, 23, and 24. On this basis, the five sets of columns visible to the right of the damaged area were tentatively assigned as column 21 to column 25.

A more careful analysis confirmed these assignments. The starting point was an assumption that all distortions in the images were linear, i.e., straight lines on the building appear as straight lines in the images. This assumption allowed three sides of a quadrilateral to be identified. These sides are shown as blue lines on an enlargement of the damaged area in Figure 5–49 and are extensions of the southeast and southwest corners of WTC 7 and the base of the windows on the tentatively assigned 11<sup>th</sup> floor. It was desirable to close the quadrilateral near the top of the image, but there were no visible features to use for this purpose. An approximate solution was obtained by drawing a line from the southwest corner, starting at the height of top of the windows on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor (extrapolated from windows visible on the west face), across to the east side, at an angle consistent with those visible on the lower floors. The angle for this line was then refined as described below.

With these four closed lines, it was possible to perform an approximate perspective correction using a transform available in Photoshop. The result was a distorted version of the original image in which the four lines formed a rectangle. If simple perspective distortion had been the only type in the image, the transform would have provided a properly scaled two dimensional view of the face. Not surprisingly, additional distortion was present, and further corrections were required. The next step was to draw lines that passed along the tops of the windows visible in the photograph for the floor below, on the same floor, and the floor immediately above the baseline defined in Figure 5–49. These lines were adjusted until they were parallel to the baseline in the perspective transform.

The crossing points for these new lines at the southwest corner allowed the number of pixels between the tentatively assigned 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> floors and the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors to be determined. The corresponding number of pixels on the corner were also determined directly from the image for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> floors and the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> floors. As expected, the number of pixels per floor was found to decrease with increasing height. By using the tentative lower floor assignments and assuming that the decreasing number of pixels per floor varied linearly with height, it was possible to derive an expression for the positions where the projected lines along the tops of the windows intersected the west edge for the floors between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> floors. The result fit the projected lower floor spacings and the observed upper floor spacings very well. The locations of the intersection points for lines running along the tops of windows on the 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> floors were estimated by extrapolation using the same approach. The locations of these intersections are indicated by small red tic marks along the southwest corner on the overlaid grid included in Figure 5–49.



**Figure 5–49. Enlarged sections of the photograph shown in Figure 5–47.**

In the view on the left, blue lines have been added that indicate projected locations for the southwest and southeast corners and for a baseline aligned along the bottom of windows located on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. A superimposed grid indicating column positions and lines for the top edges of windows on given floors is shown on the right.

Using the calculated locations at the western edge as the starting locations for lines passing across the south face and by requiring these lines to be parallel to the baseline in the perspective transform, it was possible to draw lines that should have passed along the tops of windows on higher floors. Using the initial guess for the line along the tops of the windows on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor, it was clear that the lines determined in this manner passed well above the tops of windows visible on higher floors in the photograph and video clips. However, by trial and error, it was possible to adjust the angle for the 20<sup>th</sup> floor line and, after redrawing the lines for the intervening floors and using the requirement for parallel lines in the perspective drawing, find a condition where the calculated lines passed along the tops of all of the windows visible on these floors in the images. This good agreement confirmed the tentative assignments for the visible floors.

Using the same approach as above, the predicted locations for the tops of windows on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor to the 9<sup>th</sup> floor were determined. The approach was extended further down along the western edge of the face. Since the appearance of the face changed on lower floors (Figure 5–20), the locations of floor slabs were calculated for the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor through the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. These are indicated with green tics in Figure 5–49.

The perspective transform was also used to estimate column locations. If the perspective correction had been perfect, the separations between columns 21 through 24 would have appeared equally spaced along the baseline in the perspective view. They were not. However, a plot of the five visible columns' locations, normalized by the building edges separation from the perspective view, yielded a straight line when plotted against the known relative positions based on the dimensions of the building. The slope was slightly greater than one. Since the fit included column 25, which had a much greater actual separation from column 24 than the equal column separations between columns 21 and 24, this provided strong evidence that the tentative column assignments were accurate.

Even though the line fit for the column locations was very good, it did not accurately predict the building edge locations in the perspective view. Additional distortion was present. In order to calculate the positions of the remaining columns along the baseline, the amount of additional distortion at each edge was estimated from the difference between the predicted and actual locations of the edges in the images. It was then assumed that the distortion was linearly distributed over the separations between the edge and the nearest of the five identified columns. This allowed the locations of column 15 to column 20 and column 26 to column 28 in the perspective view to be predicted using their known positions on the face. These locations on the actual image were then adjusted until they agreed with the estimated locations in the perspective view.

Once the column locations along the baseline were determined, one additional step was required to draw the lines corresponding to the columns on the face. The lines along the edges of the building were nearly vertical in the image, but they differed by a few degrees. It was assumed that the angle of the lines for the columns would vary linearly across the face, and the angles were calculated for each column location along the baseline. The combination of location along the baseline and angle allowed the column lines to be drawn.

Figure 5–49 shows the grid generated by the procedure described above overlaid on an enlarged section of Figure 5–47. The red lines running from west to east indicate the calculated positions for the tops of the windows on the 6<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> floors. These lines agree well with the window openings visible on the 8<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> floors. Note that the tops of the windows are actually located 1.06 m (3 ft 6 in.) below the base of the slab for the floor immediately above. The vertical red lines correspond to the calculated locations of

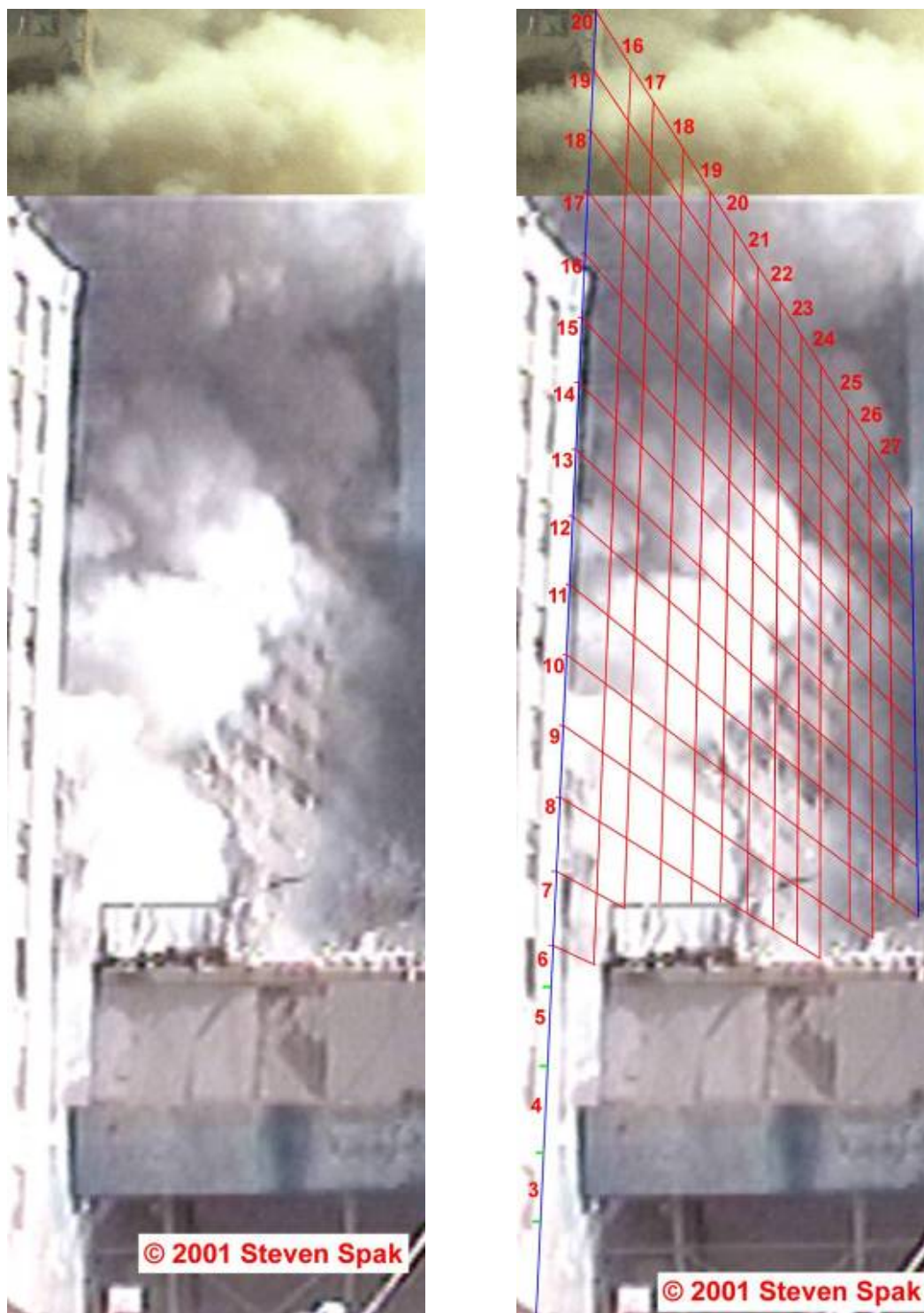
column 16 to column 27 centerlines. Locations for column 15 and column 28 are not indicated. These columns were located near the edges of the building, with centers 0.38 m (1 ft 3 in.) from the western edge and 0.43 m (1 ft 5 in.) from the eastern edge, respectively. Calculated floor positions for the 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> floor are indicated by the short green lines along the blue line identifying the southwest corner.

Figure 5–50 shows an enlargement of the damaged south face from the video frame shown in Figure 5–48 overlaid on the photograph shown in Figure 5–49. On the right, the grid taken from Figure 5–49 has been superimposed on the same image. While the image has a relatively low resolution, it is clear that the columns and spandrels to the right of the damaged area were essentially intact, but that most of the window glass had been broken out.

An enlarged section of another frame taken from this video is overlaid on the photograph in Figure 5–51. The grid from Figure 5–51 has been superimposed on the right side. Note that windows are visible on higher floors, including one on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor for which the grid line passes close to the top by the upper edge. This provides additional evidence that the grid closely represents actual locations on the face. The debris visible between columns 18 and 19 on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor was seen sporadically through the smoke in the video.

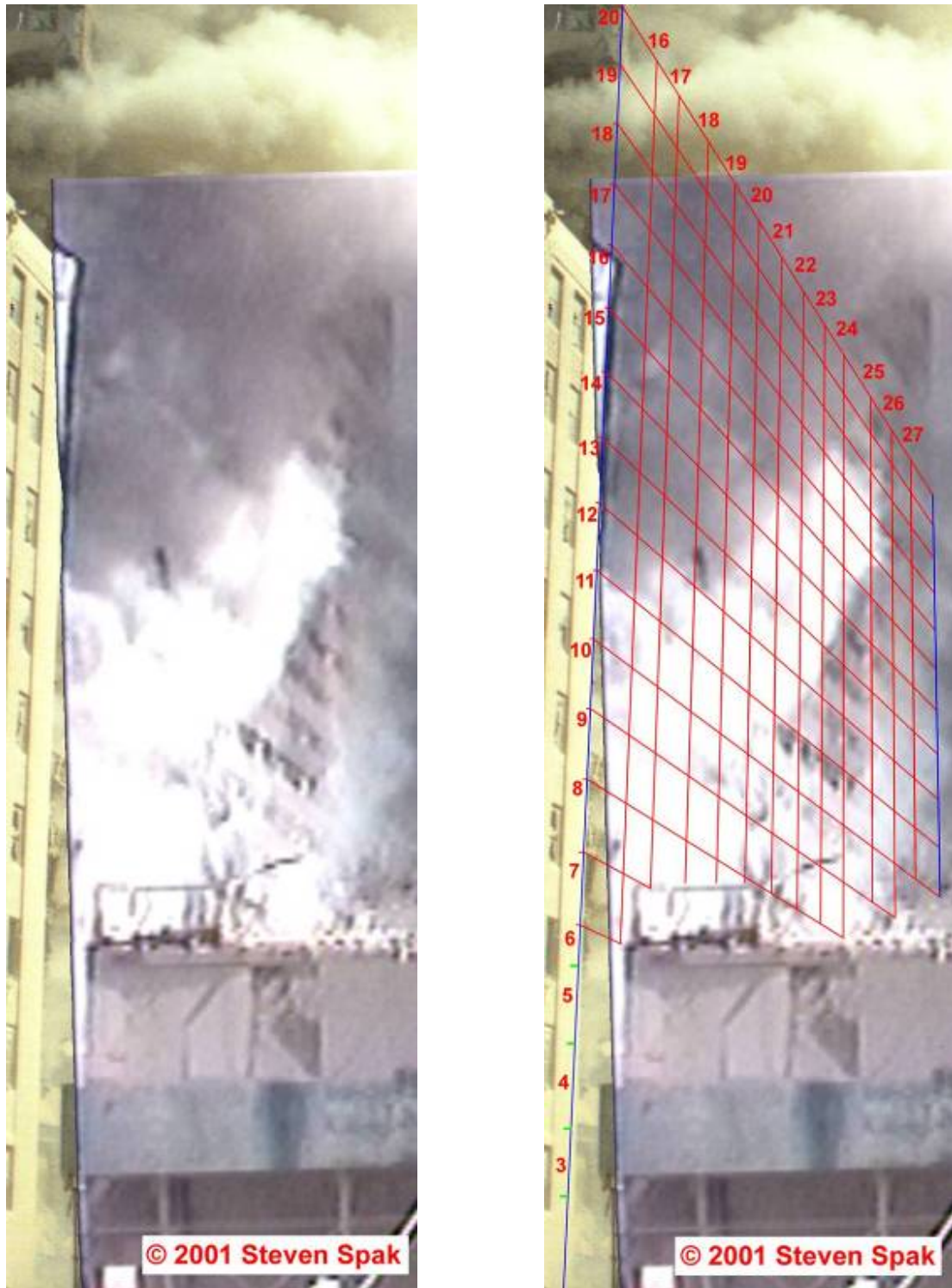
Figure 5–52 is another photograph showing damage to the south face of WTC 7. It was shot from West Street looking down Vesey Street. The Verizon Building is on the left, WTC 7 is behind it, and WTC 6 is on the right. Even though this image provides a more oblique view than the photograph in Figure 5–48, it is possible to see locations closer to the street.

The area of the image showing WTC 7 is enlarged in Figure 5–53. In the enlargement on the left, a line has been added showing the location of the southwest corner extrapolated from above, where it is visible. The approximate locations of the floors are indicated. These were estimated using the pixel separations between the floors visible above the Verizon Building, along with the known floor separations as the basis for a correction assuming only linear distortion is present in the image.



**Figure 5–50. An enlarged section of the south face of WTC 7 from the video frame in Figure 5–48.**

The pixel size and rotation of the video frame have been adjusted to overlay the photograph (portion visible at top) shown in Figure 5–47. On the right is the same section, with the grid shown in Figure 5–49 superimposed, indicating column locations and lines running along the tops of windows.



**Figure 5–51. An enlarged section of the south face of WTC 7 from a second video frame.** The pixel size and rotation of the video frame have been adjusted to overlay the photograph (portion visible at top) shown in Figure 5–47. On the right is the same section, with the grid shown in Figure 5–49 superimposed, indicating column locations and lines running along the tops of windows.



Figure 5–52. Photograph showing a portion of the south face of WTC 7 at 12:46:39 p.m.





**Figure 5–53. Two enlargements from Figure 5–52, showing the south face of WTC 7.** The vertical red line indicates the location of the southwest corner of the building. Floor number locations were determined as described in the text. The red arrow in the left enlargement identifies debris that may be from the Promenade, and the arrow on the right indicates a characteristic damage pattern.

A large amount of collapse debris is visible near the base of WTC 7 in the left portion of Figure 5–53. The distinctive three-column arrangement characteristic of panel sections from the towers identifies at least some of this debris as steel from WTC 1. The arrow on the left indicates a straight edge that may be a collapsed section of the Promenade.

The damaged area visible on the south face is enlarged further on the right side of Figure 5–53. The arrow indicates a distinct damage feature in the granite. Sighting along the tops of the windows immediately above the arrow indicates that these windows are on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor. An analysis similar to that employed to create the grid shown in Figure 5–49 was used to estimate the locations of columns

visible in Figure 5–53. These assignments indicated that the damage was located near column 22 or column 23. Figure 5–53 shows that the façade damage extended up to at least the 15<sup>th</sup> floor. In the images of the area shown earlier, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> floors had been hidden by smoke.

Another partial view of the damage on the south face is shown in Figure 5–54. This image is a frame from a video shot a few minutes earlier than the photograph shown in Figure 5–52. Based on relative locations to the front of the Verizon Building for the light pole and street sign visible in Figure 5–52 and Figure 5–54, the video was taken from a location slightly closer to WTC 7 than the photograph. Since the video and photographs were taken from nearly the same locations, differences due to parallax effects are small at the south face of WTC 7. The video frame was scaled and rotated so that it could be accurately overlaid on the photograph shown in Figure 5–52.



**Figure 5–54. Frame from a video showing a view of the south face of WTC 7** shot from roughly the same location as Figure 5–53, earlier than and within a few minutes of 12:46:39 p.m. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

The smoke that obscured much of damaged area had cleared somewhat, and a larger area of the damage on the south face is visible than in the images described above. The damaged area is enlarged in Figure 5–55. Based on the overlay of the image on the photograph, an arrow indicates the location marked in the image on the right-hand side of Figure 5–53. Comparison with Figure 5–53 indicates that the damage visible in Figure 5–55 spans multiple floors downward from the 15<sup>th</sup> floor and is at least two columns wide. Areas higher up on the south face remain hidden by smoke.



**Figure 5-55. Enlargement of the damaged area visible on the south face of WTC 7 in Figure 5-54.**

The arrow is positioned at roughly the same location as that shown in the right-hand image in Figure 5-53.

Figure 5-56 shows another view of the south face of WTC 7 shot looking down Vesey Street from a location somewhat closer to WTC 7. A large number of steel panel sections from WTC 1 are visible lying in the street. At least one of these panel sections struck the south face of the Verizon Building and created an opening on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floors. One panel section is leaning against this building at ground level. Further down the street, a number of panel sections are visible lying at the base of the south face of WTC 7. Some of these panel sections can be identified in Figure 5-52 and Figure 5-53, but they are much clearer in Figure 5-56. The debris that may be a portion of the collapsed Promenade, indicated by an arrow in the right-hand image in Figure 5-53, is difficult to identify because it is in shadow.



**Figure 5–56. Photograph of damage on the south face of WTC 7, shot looking down Vesey Street between the Verizon Building (left) and WTC 6 (right), shortly after 1:30 p.m.**  
The intensity levels have been adjusted.

The smoke near the base of WTC 7 had momentarily cleared at this time, and it is possible to observe a damaged area on the lower part of the south face. An opening in the building spanning several floors is apparent. This part of the image has been enlarged in Figure 5–57. A row of several windows with some columns visible can be seen near the top of the visible damage. Closer inspection reveals that there is another row of windows immediately below. A single window is visible just to the right of the curved damage section. Lower down a single rectangular opening is present to the left of the opening in the face. This opening is much taller than the windows visible above. Its shape indicates that it is one of the vents that spanned the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. Thus, the damage visible in the image spans the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> floors.

There is insufficient information in the image to identify the exact horizontal location of the damage on the face. However, it is likely that the damage area is a downward extension of the opening visible in Figure 5–47 and Figure 5–49 to the immediate left of column 20. If this is correct, the opening in this area extends from at least the 5<sup>th</sup> floor to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.

Another view of the debris piled up at the base of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–58. The large number of steel panel sections from WTC 1 is evident. A small fire is burning in the pile. The large amount of debris in Vesey Street is consistent with the large areas of WTC 1 panel sections that were described earlier as falling toward WTC 7.



**Figure 5–57. Expanded portion of Figure 5–56 showing damage on the south face of WTC 7.** The contrast of the image has been enhanced.



**Figure 5–58. View of the rubble at the base of the south face of WTC 7.** The original image was cropped, and the intensity levels and contrast were adjusted.

Another frame from a video clip showing the south face of WTC 7 taken looking up Vesey Street is shown in Figure 5–59. Visible floors along the south edge of the west face are indicated. The hole near the center of the south face is only partly visible, but this image is noteworthy because the smoke is clear enough to confirm that the spandrels and columns are intact over a large area to the east of the hole. By using lines running along the tops of the windows to extrapolate to the west edge, it was possible to identify this area as extending from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.



**Figure 5–59. Frame from a video clip shot shortly after 12:30 p.m. showing the south face of WTC 7 framed by the Verizon Building and WTC 6. The intensity levels have been adjusted and floor numbers have been added.**

Figure 5–60 shows a long-distance photograph shot from a helicopter just after 12:30 p.m., in which the south face of WTC 7 is partially visible. Red lines have been added indicating the west and east edges of the face. The west edge was easily identified, but, due to the presence of smoke, the east edge line had to be drawn by starting at the upper corner, which is just visible, and assuming the east edge was parallel to the west edge.



**Figure 5–60. Photograph of the WTC site shot around 12:35 p.m. from a helicopter. The red lines identify the west and east edges of the south face of WTC 7.**

Figure 5–61 is an enlargement of the lower portion of WTC 7 from Figure 5–60. Floor numbers have been added along the southern edge of the west face. Details are difficult to discern due to the distance of the photograph, but it is possible to see parts of the south face that were damaged during the collapse of WTC 1. A dark area extending up to the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> floor can be seen near the center of the face. This location suggests that this is the damage identified earlier near column 22, based on Figure 5–52 to Figure 5–55. This damage appears to extend downward to about the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. As observed earlier, intact spandrels are visible to the right of this opening.



**Figure 5–61. Enlarged portion of Figure 5–60 showing the south face of WTC 7.**  
The section has been enhanced by adjusting the intensity levels. The red lines indicate the west and east edges. Floor numbers have been added.

A second damaged area is apparent just to the left and below that described above. This opening seems to extend down to about the 5<sup>th</sup> floor where it becomes hidden by smoke. The location of this damage is consistent with that identified earlier in Figure 5–47, Figure 5–49, Figure 5–56, and Figure 5–57. There appear to be two spandrels located just above this opening near the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> floors. Closer inspection suggests that these spandrels have been partially dislodged since they do not line up well with the spandrels visible to the right.

There appear to be one or more panel sections lying up against the south face of WTC 7. These seem to be raised off the ground somewhat, but appear to be too low to be on top of the Promenade. It is possible that the Promenade has partially collapsed in this area. There appear to be two openings in the south face of the building immediately above the panel sections. It is not possible to confirm whether the smaller opening on the right resulted from structural damage, since this area was primarily glass enclosed (see Figure 5–20), and the glass may simply have been broken out. On the other hand, the opening on the left seems to extend well above the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, suggesting that some structural damage is present in this area. The granite at this height on the southwest corner appears to have been disrupted, which agrees with damage visible on this corner in Figure 5–47 and Figure 5–49.

There is a dark area in Figure 5–61 extending from the 8<sup>th</sup> floor to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, where it is difficult to make out the southwest corner of WTC 7. As shown in Figure 5–62 and Figure 5–63 below, the southwest corner was damaged at this location by falling debris from WTC 1.

Figure 5–62 was shot from Jersey City on the opposite side of the Hudson River. It shows portions of the southwest corner and adjacent faces of WTC 7, flanked by World Financial Center 3 on the left and by World Financial Center 2 on the right. The Winter Garden lies at the base of WTC 7. The roofline of WTC 6 is visible just above the Winter Garden, and a small corner of the Verizon Building is also visible just to the right of World Financial Center 3. WTC 7 floor numbers have been added to the photograph.

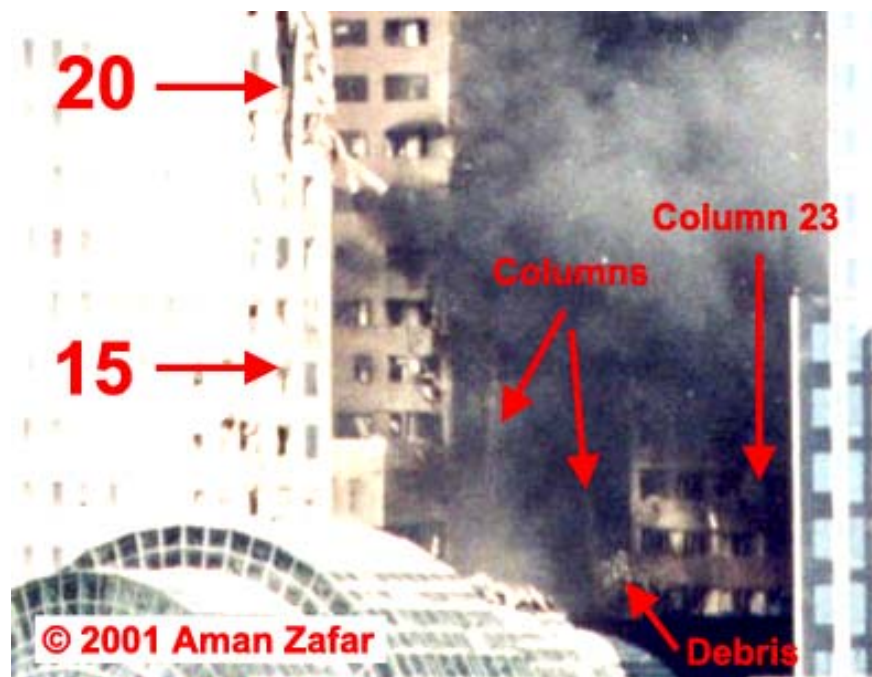


**Figure 5–62. Photograph showing the southwest corner of WTC 7 in the early afternoon.** The buildings visible on the right and left are World Financial Center 2 and World Financial Center 3, respectively. The structure in the foreground is the Winter Garden. The base of WTC 7 is also hidden by WTC 6. Numbers and arrows indicate WTC 7 floors.

Figure 5–63 shows an enlargement of the region of the lower floors of WTC 7 from Figure 5–62. Floor locations and certain features have been noted. This image of the building reveals considerable detail about the condition of the building at the southwest corner. Consider the feature marked “Debris.” It appears to be an object on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor spandrel. A similar feature is visible on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor spandrel, just to the left of column 20 in Figure 5–49. Four equally spaced sets of columns are easily identified to the immediate right of the debris in Figure 5–63. If the rightmost of these is identified as column 20, there should be space for column 16 to column 19 between this column and the west edge of the face. By simply drawing lines along the corner of the building and along the visible columns in Figure 5–62, it was



possible to confirm that the spacing visible between the building edge and the first column to the right of the debris was consistent with its assignment as column 20.



**Figure 5-63.** Enlargement of the lower part of the southwest corner of WTC 7 from Figure 5-62, with certain features identified. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

In Figure 5-49, the area to the immediate right of column 20 on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors appeared dark, as if it was an opening, while the higher floors were hidden by smoke. However, it is clear from Figure 5-63 that the columns between column 20 and column 23 were intact on the 11<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup> floors, along with the spandrel beams and at least part of the granite cladding on the 12<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup> floors. In Figure 5-49, the granite cladding appears to be damaged below the 13<sup>th</sup> floor near column 23.

In Figure 5-63, the area between corner column 15 and column 20 appears to be open over the 11<sup>th</sup> floor to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor. Closer inspection reveals what appear to be two columns (marked with arrows) in the opening. They are located near the positions expected for columns 16 and 19. These columns are not parallel to the building edge or columns 20 to 23. The top of the visible section of column 19 is bent inward toward the west, and the bottom of column 16 is bent in the same direction. In Figure 5-49, there is a straight edge visible near the expected location for column 19 on floors 9 and 10 that appears to have been pushed towards column 20. There are no signs of columns 17 or 18 in Figure 5-63.

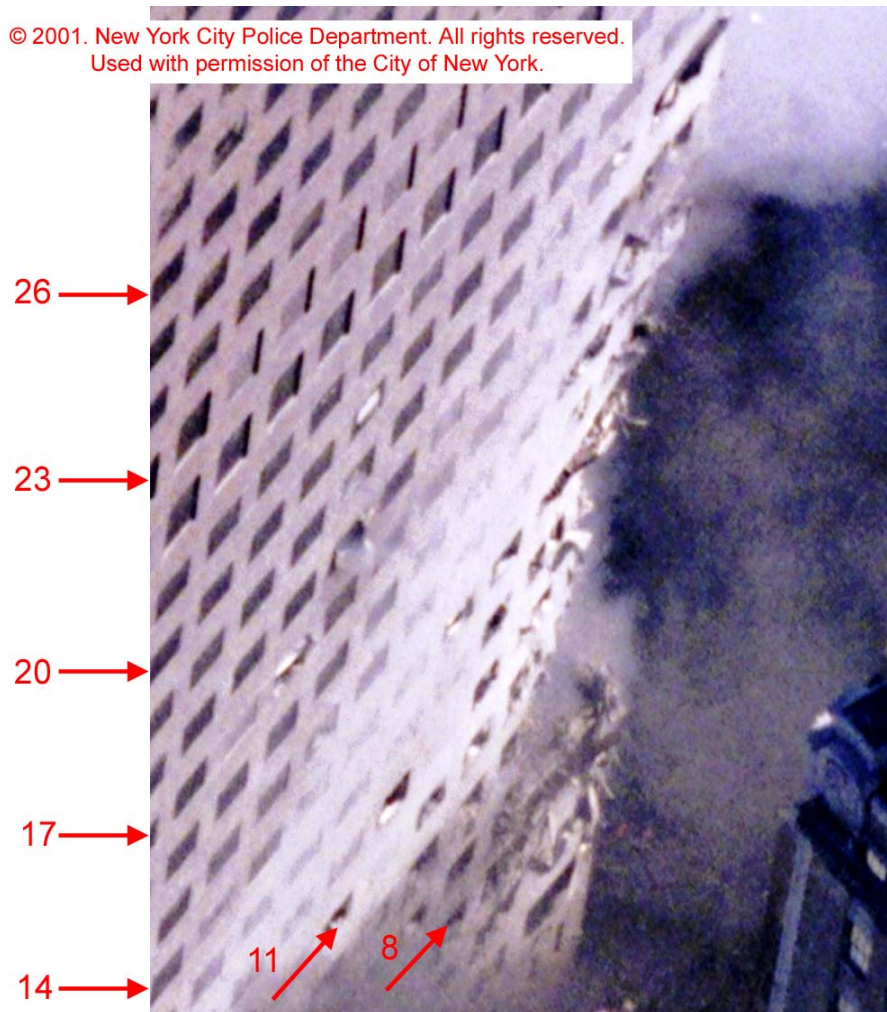
### Damage to the Southwest Corner

Evidence shows that there was extensive structural damage to the southwest corner of the building, and in particular the corner column 15, from the 17<sup>th</sup> floor down to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. The indications of damage on the southwest corner of WTC 7 in Figure 5-63 are more clearly seen in the following figures.

Figure 5-64 shows a photograph of WTC 7 shot from a helicopter between 2:15 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. Damage is visible low on the southwest corner of the building. This area has been enlarged in Figure 5-65, and arrows and numbers have been added that identify the floors corresponding to given rows of windows.



**Figure 5–64.** Photograph showing the north and west faces of WTC 7, shot from a helicopter between 2:15 p.m. and 2:45 p.m.



**Figure 5–65.** Enlargement of an area from the photograph in Figure 5–64 showing part of the west face of WTC 7. The image intensity has been adjusted, and arrows and floor numbers have been added for the corresponding rows of windows.

The image shows is considerable damage to the southwest corner, starting at the 17<sup>th</sup> floor and extending downward to at least the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Below the 17<sup>th</sup> floor, the corner of the building appears to be missing. At a minimum, the granite cladding and its supports have been removed. Figure 5–66 shows a photograph taken at 12:48 p.m. from West Street showing the same area of WTC 7 and an enlargement of the southwest corner. In this image, it is clear that the corner granite has been removed, and it appears that the corner column 15 (Figure 5–20 and Figure 5–26) has been exposed, but is still in place. This column was located just behind the southwest corner. The dull color of the steel indicates that its insulation had been stripped away.



**Figure 5–66. Photographs showing the southwest corner of WTC 7, shot from West Street at 12:47:40 p.m.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted, and floor labels have been added. The area of the corner is enlarged on the right.

A second aerial photograph (Figure 5–67) provides a partial view of the damaged area from a closer location and a less oblique angle than these in Figure 5–64 and Figure 5–65. The damaged area from this photograph is enlarged in Figure 5–68 with floor numbers indicated. In this image, the end of the horizontal member at the base of the 17<sup>th</sup> floor windows can be seen clearly, and there is no indication that column 15 is attached to it.

In Figure 5–65, it can be seen that damage to the corner of the 14<sup>th</sup> floor extends further along the west wall than on higher floors. It is clear in Figure 5–68 that the corner at this floor had been pushed inward,

and that there was considerable façade damage. The aerial views in Figure 5–65 and Figure 5–68 suggest that there was substantial damage between column 14 and the south edge on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. There is no sign of corner column 15 in these images. Although this column appears to be present in ground shots shown in Figure 5–63 and Figure 5–66, it was likely displaced.



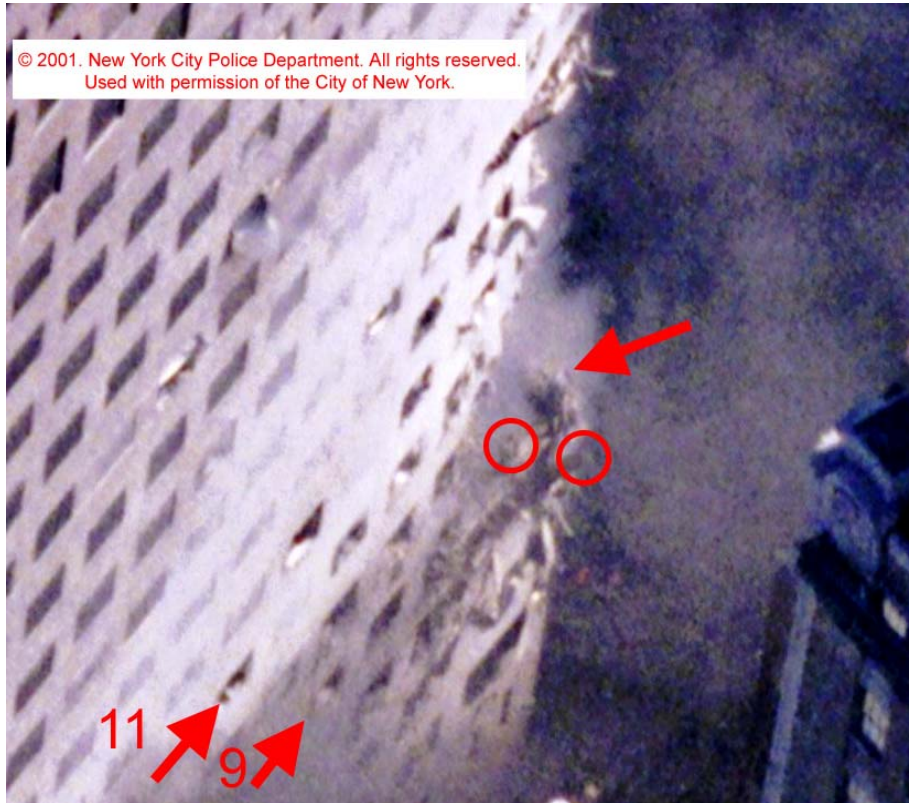
**Figure 5–67.** Photograph showing the north and west faces of WTC 7, shot from a helicopter between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.



**Figure 5–68.** Enlargement of an area from the photograph in Figure 5–67 showing part of the west face of WTC 7.

Arrows and floor numbers have been added for the corresponding rows of windows.

In Figure 5–66, the southwest corner is not visible below the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. In Figure 5–65, the corner column certainly appears to be absent from the 12<sup>th</sup> floor down to the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. Closer inspection of this image provides strong evidence that this is the case. The southwest corner area of WTC 7 from Figure 5–64 is enlarged further in Figure 5–69, and circles and arrows have been added indicating features discussed in the following paragraphs.



**Figure 5–69. Enlargement of an area from the photograph in Figure 5–64 showing the damaged southwest corner of WTC 7.**

The image intensity has been adjusted and arrows and floor numbers have been added for the corresponding rows of windows. The circles and arrow indicate features discussed in the text.

The circles and arrow in Figure 5–69 indicate features that appear to be the tops of columns, where the upper column sections have been dislodged or severed. Though barely resolved, it is possible to make out the flanges on the top and bottom of the wide flange spandrel steel beams that joined the columns on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. By comparing the depth of the horizontal structure on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor with that on the floor immediately below, it is clear that its width was much narrower. This is because the depth of the exposed spandrel beam was roughly 0.9 m (3 ft), while the granite spandrel covers and their supporting trusses spanned 1.9 m (6 ft 2 in.).

The right circle in Figure 5–69 encloses the end of a column near the corner that appears to have been dislodged from the steel spandrel and pushed outward. The arrow in the image points to a third object near the corner that also appears to be a column that has been cut off. In this case, the column is located close to the corner, suggesting that it is corner column 15. If correct, the spacings indicate that the two circled locations are columns 14 and 14A. It was important to determine whether it was reasonable to

have observed three severed columns at this location. The design drawings indicate that two story steel column sections were connected with bolted splices at the odd floors. The connections were 1.07 m (3 ft 6 in.) above the floor. Failures could occur at splice connections, so the locations of the ends on Floor 9 for the three severed columns visible in the image are consistent with their expected locations.

The spandrel at the base of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, visible in Figure 5–69, appears to turn 90° near the corner (right arrow) and to continue to the east for a short distance before abruptly terminating. This suggests that the spandrel beam on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor on the south face was cut by the falling WTC 1 steel near the southwest corner. Strong visual evidence supporting this conclusion is available in Figure 5–47 (enlarged in Figure 5–49), Figure 5–50, and Figure 5–66. In each of these images, a short section of spandrel is visible at the southwest corner of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor that appears to extend as far as the expected location for column 16, before abruptly disappearing. The combined observations on the south and west faces confirm that structural damage was present in a band from column 14 on the west face to column 19 on the south face.

There is considerable damage to the façade on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. The misalignment of column 14A certainly extends to this level. There seems to have been some damage to the corner of the building as low down as the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floors. For some reason, the window at the far end of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, which contained vents, stands out in Figure 5–69. It is likely that the vents were broken out.

### **Damage to the East Side of the Promenade, Pedestrian Bridge, and East Sides of Floors 1 through 4 on the South Face**

Images of the lower floors on the south face of WTC 7 shot from the east side of the building are very limited. However, some photographers and videographers did manage to reach as far as the corner of Vesey and West Broadway. Figure 5–70 reproduces a black and white photograph that was shot from the intersection of Vesey Street and West Broadway looking west down Vesey Street. The entire length of the Pedestrian Bridge is visible, and it is clear that it was not collapsed by debris from the towers. Another view of the bridge following the collapse of WTC 1 was shown in Figure 5–19. While the bridge was covered with debris, the only substantial damage to its cover was on the southern side near the WTC passageway between WTC 5 and WTC 6.

The Promenade is visible behind the Pedestrian Bridge. There is a large pile of steel formed by several panel sections from WTC 1 located between the Pedestrian Bridge and the Promenade near the base of WTC 6 on the south side of the street. There appears to be either a part of or a single panel section located near the center of the street. There is also a single piece of large debris visible near the base of the Pedestrian Bridge that seems to be leaning against the south face. It is not clear if this is structural steel from the towers. These are the only indications of large steel pieces between the Promenade and the corner of West Broadway and Vesey Street. The large pieces of steel observed on Vesey Street from the west are beyond the view of this photograph.

An enlarged and enhanced section of Figure 5–70 showing the south face of WTC 7 is included in Figure 5–71. The debris deposited near the south face of WTC 7 is nearly one story high. Many columns can be discerned on the south face looking under the Pedestrian Bridge. The spacing and size of these columns indicate that these were part of the nonstructural system used to support glass and doors in the four story lobby area. (See Figure 5–15, Figure 5–16, Figure 5–36, and Figure 5–37.) The glass was apparently broken out between the columns based on the depth visible. It is also possible to discern some of the horizontal supports for the glass façade. Even though it is not possible to identify individual columns



**Figure 5–70. Black and white photograph shot from the corner of Vesey Street and West Broadway looking west down Vesey Street.**

The time of the photograph is unknown, but it was taken prior to the time when flames appeared on the east face of WTC 7 around 2:00 p.m.



**Figure 5–71. Enlargement of the photograph in Figure 5–70 showing the south face of WTC 7.**

The segment has been enhanced by adjusting the intensity levels.

over the entire distance between the Pedestrian Bridge and the Promenade, there are no indications of large openings on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors in this area.

On the right in Figure 5–71, at least 15 similar columns are visible at the level of and above the Pedestrian Bridge. A wide band is visible running horizontally across the face above the bridge. Based on the façade drawing for the south face in Figure 5–20 and photographs in Figure 5–15 and Figure 5–16, this band is the granite spandrel covers that separated the glass enclosed lobby from the louvers located on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors. As evident from the drawing and photograph, these louvers were supported by non structural columns that lined up with those in the lobby area. Columns are visible on either side of the Pedestrian Bridge below the granite spandrel cover indicating that the lobby glass support system was intact on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors at these locations.

The area visible above the granite in Figure 5–71 starts just to the left of the Pedestrian Bridge and extends towards the west at least as far as the fifteenth support column from the east edge. As can be seen in Figure 5–20, these columns nearly span the distance from the east edge of the face to the Promenade. Structural steel columns 23 to 28 were located on this section of the face (see Figure 5–20). Since these columns were located behind the glass and louver support systems, these observations indicate that there was likely no structural damage to these columns on the 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> floors.

A second view of Vesey Street and the Promenade taken from a short video clip is shown in Figure 5–72. The dark area at the top of the image is the bottom of the Pedestrian Bridge. In the unaltered left view, large amounts of smoke are visible on the far side of the Promenade. In the right view, the intensity levels have been adjusted to emphasize the darker areas in the image. A number of steel panel sections are visible on the left side of the street between the Pedestrian Bridge and the Promenade. It is also possible to see that several panel sections landed on or near the south end of the Promenade, and this end may be partially collapsed. The portion of a panel section near the center of the street is visible, but is not as easily identified as in Figure 5–70. A part of the large piece of debris observed earlier leaning up against the south face of WTC 7 is visible at the far right of the image. The size and shape of the object suggest that it was a steel column or beam. In all, the main portion of the east side of the Promenade, with the possible exception of the far south end, was not collapsed by the steel from WTC 1, although the raised side structures had suffered considerable damage.



**Figure 5–72. Two versions of a frame from a video taken from the corner of Vesey Street and West Broadway in the early afternoon.**

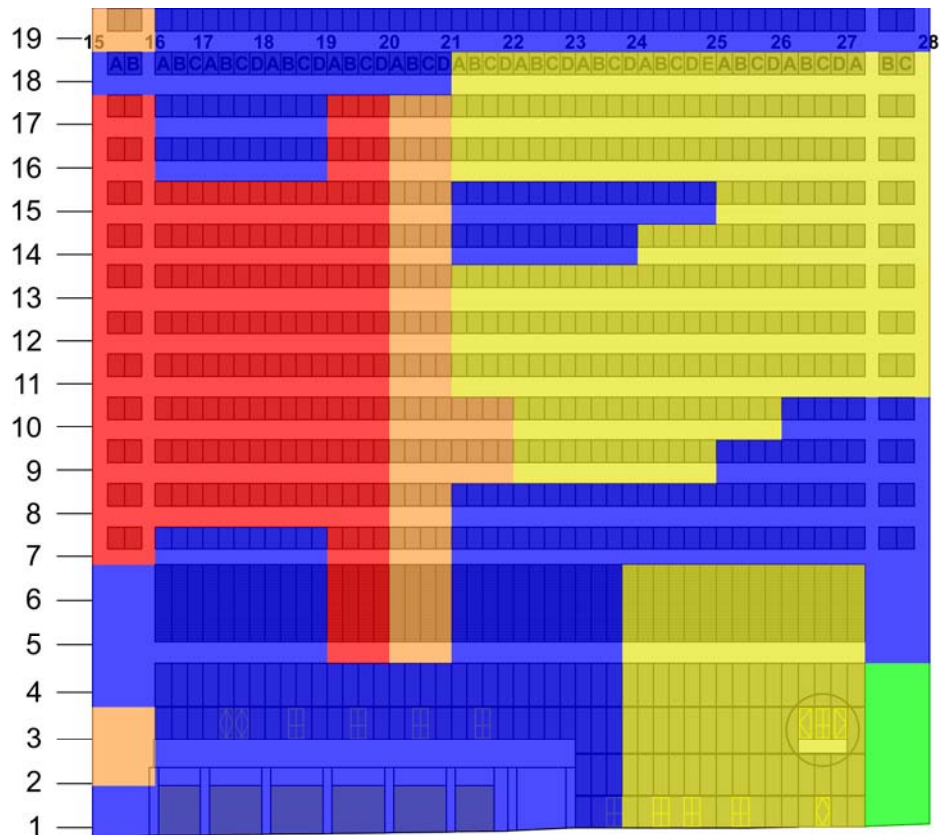
Left: the frame as captured; Right: the image with intensities adjusted to emphasize the darker areas.



The south face of WTC 7 was just beyond the right side of this image. Nonetheless, a pile of debris several stories high is visible rising above the Promenade at the right hand edge of Figure 5–72. Recall that there was evidence of debris in the same area from ground and aerial views taken from the west. The presence of this debris is consistent with the south face damage observed at higher floors at roughly the same location.

### Summary: Damage to the Lower 19 Floors

The available visual evidence concerning damage inflicted on the lower floors of the south face of WTC 7 due to the collapses of WTC 2 and WTC 1 has been reviewed. While the evidence is fragmentary, it seems clear that portions of the western side of the south face were struck by substantial sections of steel from WTC 1 and that the structural framework of the building was damaged. The observations have been summarized in the color-coded damage map for the south face shown in Figure 5–73. This map is based on Figure 5–20 and shows the lower 19 floors.



**Figure 5–73. Summary of observed damage for the lower 19 floors on the south face of WTC 7 following the collapse of WTC 1.**

Damage is color coded as follows: green (■) – no visible damage, yellow (■) – window glass broken out, orange (■) – granite and underlying truss damage, red (■) – damage to outer perimeter structural steel, and blue (■) – not visible.

## Damage above the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor on the South Face

Imagery reveals that portions of the south face above the 19<sup>th</sup> floor were also struck by debris and damaged. These floors were generally hidden by smoke, but some areas were occasionally visible. The observations will be discussed starting at the roof and working downward. Figure 5–8 shows the roof and upper floors of WTC 7 prior to the collapse of WTC 1. Figure 5–9 is a view from a different angle, taken well after the collapse of WTC 1. Close inspection reveals some damage to the parapet on the south side of the roofline.

A portion of Figure 5–9 is enlarged in Figure 5–74. Arrows indicate two damaged areas. The lower arrow points to damage on the parapet. Some debris is evident between the parapet and the south penthouse. The second arrow points to an area where the south screenwall connecting the east and west penthouses was damaged.



**Figure 5–74. Cropped photograph, taken from a helicopter, showing the roof of WTC 7 from the northwest.**

A damaged area on the south side has been enhanced by adjusting the intensity levels. Arrows indicate two areas of damage discussed in the text.

Another view of these two damaged areas, taken from a helicopter, is shown in Figure 5–75. The debris at the location between the south face parapet and the east edge of the west penthouse is better resolved. A large object is visible protruding from the roof. The damage to the south screenwall between the two penthouses seems to consist of displaced wall sections. There appears to be at least one column in the immediate vicinity. The damage indicates that substantial pieces of debris (mostly likely steel) struck the roof of WTC 7 on the south side.

Another view of the upper portion of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–76. This is roughly the same view as shown in Figure 5–8, which was taken just prior to the collapse of WTC 1. The two damaged areas on the roof are visible in the later photograph. The debris projecting from the roof appears to consist of at least two separate columns. This suggests that it was a part of a panel section from WTC 1. Comparison of the two photographs indicates that a substantial fraction of the screenwall near the east penthouse was dislodged.



**Figure 5–75. Cropped photograph, taken from a helicopter, showing the roof of WTC 7 from just north of due west.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–76. Cropped photograph showing the upper portion of WTC 7 as viewed from the southwest.**

It was shot around 12:30 p.m. from a helicopter.

A large opening in the sloped curtain wall running between the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors is apparent in Figure 5–76 immediately below the damaged area on the roof. Less damaged areas are also visible on either side of this opening. The damaged area has been enlarged in Figure 5–77.

A number of white rectangles are visible running along the upper edge of the face. This is in the area of the 4 ft high parapet where sloped glass had been placed to create the effect of a top row of windows in front of the parapet, as can be seen in Figure 5–8. The different appearances of the area between Figure 5–8 and Figure 5–77 suggests that the glass was broken out during the collapse of WTC 1.

The recessed windows on the south face at floors 46 and 47 allowed the exact locations and sizes of the damaged areas to be determined. The damage began at the 12<sup>th</sup> window opening from the west and extended to the east for roughly eight windows. Based on Figure 5–20, the principal damage falls



**Figure 5–77. Enlargement of the area of damage on the roof and south sides of the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors of WTC 7 in Figure 5–76.**

between column 19 and column 21. Smaller openings in the curtain wall are evident at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> windows from the west and over a width of six windows just to the east of the largest opening. While it is clear that the curtain wall has been removed, it is not possible to discern whether or not structural damage occurred. It appears that the recessed concrete roofline at the base of the 46<sup>th</sup> floor between column 20 and column 21 was cut through.

Another view of the damage near the top of the south face of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–78. The debris projecting from the roof and the damage to the south screen wall can be discerned. The large opening identified earlier on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors can be seen clearly along with columns and beams inside the hole. In this image, the opening extends at least as far down as the top of the 44<sup>th</sup> floor. The south face



**Figure 5–78. View of the south face of WTC 7 from a video shot from a helicopter located to the southwest of the WTC site, likely after 12:00 p.m. The intensity levels have been adjusted.**

below this point is obscured by smoke. Exterior column 20 and the spandrel beams between this column and columns 19 and 21 are not visible on the 45<sup>th</sup> floor. On this basis, it was concluded that structural damage was present between columns 19 and 21 on the 44<sup>th</sup> through 47<sup>th</sup> floors.

The space between the western edge of the face and column 19 is visible for the 43<sup>rd</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> floors. Some façade damage is visible on the corner (see discussion below) while elsewhere the façade seems to be intact, with the exception of the window glass that appears to have been broken over this area. A portion of the upper part of the south face is visible to the immediate right of the large damaged area. The glass appears to have been broken at numerous locations along the top row of windows, including the 11 openings to the immediate east of column 21.

Figure 5–79 shows the upper west side of the south face of WTC 7 around 4:45 p.m. The façade damage on the southwest corner can be clearly seen on the 41<sup>st</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> floors. The façade damage is particularly heavy on the 42<sup>nd</sup> to 44<sup>th</sup> floors. It appears that an object may have entered window 15A on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor. The end of the truss that supported the corner granite spandrel cover on the western edge of the face is visible on this floor. It is possible to discern the area between columns 15 and 18 from the 34<sup>th</sup> floor up to the top of the building. While the façade appears to be intact at locations away from the southwest corner, the four columns are visible on most floors, indicating the window glass was broken at most of these locations.

In a frame from a distant view of WTC 7 captured from a helicopter video (not shown) much of the south face was smoke free, and some details could be seen. In particular, it was possible to see the upper east side of the south face down to the 43<sup>rd</sup> floor. While the alternating granite panel covers and windows could be identified, the columns were not visible. This suggests that this portion of the face was undamaged.

A large area on the west side of the south face was visible down to the 26<sup>th</sup> floor. Columns were visible at many locations, indicating that most of the window glass in this area was broken. In the same frame it was possible to see a section of the south face from the 35<sup>th</sup> floor to the 40<sup>th</sup> floor, east of column 19, where it appeared that the spandrel covers on these floors abruptly stopped, and column 19 was not visible on these floors. There was a dark band between the locations where the granite spandrel covers appeared to end and an area to the east that was hidden by a foreground building. It was not clear whether this vertical dark band was due to the presence of smoke or was a feature on the face of the building. As discussed further below, additional images suggest that the band was likely damage to the building.

Figure 5–80 shows a similar view of the south face taken from another video shot from a helicopter. Heavy smoke covers part of the face, but portions are visible elsewhere. The vertical dark band between columns 19 and 20 is visible between the 34<sup>th</sup> floor and 37<sup>th</sup> floor. While column 21 is visible on each of these floors to the immediate right of the dark band, it is not clear whether columns 19 and 20 remain in place. The alternating granite panels and windows are visible further to the east. Columns are visible through a limited number of windows in this area.

The cropped photograph shown in Figure 5–81 provides a better view of the dark vertical band on the south face of WTC 7. It was taken from West Street at a location north of Liberty Street. The distinct vertical dark band can be seen from the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor to the 40<sup>th</sup> floor. Most of the columns between the band and southwest corner are easily distinguished and confirm that the band lies between columns 19 and 20. It appears that both of these columns are in place on some of these floors, particularly column 19 on the



**Figure 5–79. Cropped photograph showing the west side of the south face of WTC 7, taken between 4:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. from near the corner of West Street and Liberty Street.**

The intensities have been adjusted and labels indicating floors have been added.



**Figure 5–80. Cropped view of the south face of WTC 7 taken from a video shot from a helicopter hovering to the southwest of the WTC site around 1:00 p.m.** The intensity levels have been adjusted, and floor numbers have been added.

**Figure 5–81. Cropped photograph showing the south face of WTC 7, shot from West Street in the mid to late afternoon.**

The intensity levels and contrast have been adjusted, and floor numbers have been added.



33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> floors. At other locations, it is difficult to identify the columns on either side of the dark band. There is no visible indication that the granite spandrel covers are in place between columns 19 and 20, even though the covers on either side are very distinct. Even though the granite spandrel cover between columns 20 and 21 on the 34<sup>th</sup> floor appears to be damaged, in general the granite panel covers seem to be in place to the east of the dark band.

Another aerial view of the south face is shown in Figure 5–82. The vertical dark band is visible extending down to at least the 24<sup>th</sup> floor. A framework is visible to the immediate left on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> floors between columns 18 and 19. The spacings between columns are much wider than window openings seen on floors with intact façade, and the columns widths and spandrel heights are smaller. This indicates that the steel in this area has been exposed by removing the granite spandrel covers and their backing trusses.

The images discussed above, and additional images not reproduced here, were used to prepare the damage map shown in Figure 5–83 for the entire south face of WTC 7. The lower portion of this map was shown in Figure 5–73. The same color key has been used here, with the addition of gray to indicate the vertical



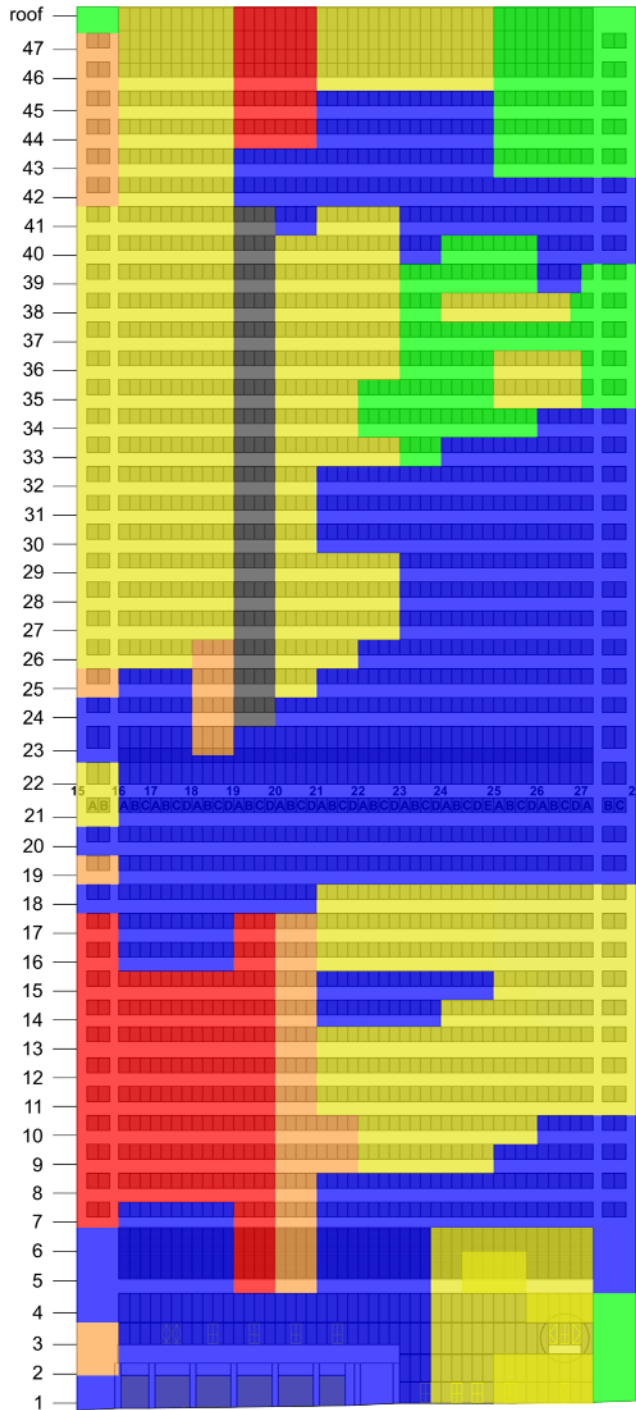
**Figure 5–82. Cropped view of the south face of WTC 7 taken from a video shot from a helicopter hovering to the southwest of the WTC site around 1:00 p.m. The intensity levels have been adjusted.**

dark band on the upper floors. While it appears as if the vertical dark band between columns 19 and 20 is damage to the building, and the location falls immediately below the opening at the top of the building (see Figure 5–76 to Figure 5–78), images with sufficient detail to confirm this have not been identified. It is also unclear if columns 19 and 20 have been damaged or removed.

While the condition of a large fraction of the south face is characterized in Figure 5–83, large areas of blue are still present. Generally, these areas were hidden by smoke. A large fraction of this area is on the east side of the face. There is no visual evidence suggesting that significant structural or façade damage



occurred at these locations. It was not possible to observe the area between columns 19 and 20 on the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> floors. This might have provided a better understanding of the link between the vertical dark band and the damage seen on higher floors. Significant damage was identified on the west side of the south face, particularly to the west of column 21. It is possible that additional damage was hidden in the unobserved areas on this side of the face.



**Figure 5–83. Observed damage on the south face of WTC 7 following the collapse of WTC 1.**

Damage is color coded as follows:  
 green (■) -- no visible damage, yellow (■) – window glass broken out, orange (■) – granite and underlying truss damage, red (■) – damage to outer-perimeter structural steel, gray (■) – possible structural damage, and blue (■) – not visible.

## Observed Damage to the West Face of WTC 7

Not surprisingly, the major debris damage to WTC 7 was to the south face, which faced WTC 1. However, as can be seen in Figure 5–63 to Figure 5–69, Figure 5–79, and Figure 5–80, some façade damage and window breakage also occurred on the west face. Figure 5–84 shows the upper portion of the west face in a photograph taken from a helicopter. Floor and column locations are indicated. (See Figure 5–26 for column and window nomenclature.) Façade damage is visible on the southwest corner on floors 40 through 46, and the glass for window 14A was broken on the many floors where column 14A can be seen. With the exception of a few broken windows on the 44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> floors, the remainder of the façade appears to have been intact on the 34<sup>th</sup> through 47<sup>th</sup> floors.



**Figure 5–84. Cropped photograph showing the west face of WTC 7, taken from a helicopter around 3:00 p.m.**  
The intensity levels have been adjusted.

Another photograph showing the upper part of the west face of WTC 7 is reproduced in Figure 5–85. Generally, the damage visible on the 34<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> floors is consistent with that seen in Figure 5–84. One exception is window 11 on the 41<sup>st</sup> floor. A small portion of the glass appears to be broken out in Figure 5–85, which is not evident in Figure 5–84. Most of the granite appears to be intact between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> floors, with only minor damage evident at the southwest corner at the base of the 26<sup>th</sup> floor and on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor. Glass is missing from windows 13A, 13B, 14A, and 15 on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> floors. As discussed below, fires were observed in these areas, which may have opened up these windows prior to the time when Figure 5–85 was taken. Elsewhere on these floors, glass is missing from isolated windows 31-5, 28-9, 27-14, 25-13B, 24-14A, 23-12, and 23-13B.



**Figure 5–85. Cropped photograph showing the west face of WTC 7, taken shortly after 3:00 p.m. from West Street.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted.

In a video taken shortly after 12:00 p.m. from West Street, the glass in windows 13A, 13B, 14, and 14A on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor was intact. This means that the windows were opened later by the fire that grew on this floor. No complete early views of these windows on the 29<sup>th</sup> floor were identified, but an aerial photograph taken at 10:41:52 a.m. showed that the glass in window 12 was intact at that time. The initial condition of the windows to the south on this floor could not be determined.

The area on the west face between the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor and 11<sup>th</sup> floor can be seen Figure 5–86, which was cropped from the aerial photograph shown in Figure 5–67. The damaged southwest corner starting at the 17<sup>th</sup> floor will be discussed further below.



**Figure 5–86. Image, cropped from Figure 5–67, showing the west face of WTC 7, shot from a helicopter between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Column and floor numbers have been added.**

There is no façade damage apparent on the 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> floors, but glass or louvers are broken or missing in multiple windows. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor, glass is missing from window 3 and from the four windows near the south edge, where a fire had evidently been present earlier. The earliest photograph of this region in the NIST database was taken just before 12:30 p.m. It shows a fire in window 22-14A, but the window glass further to the north was intact on this floor. The initial condition for window 22-14A is assigned as unknown. The following windows were open or damaged: 21-13A, 21-14, 21-14A, 20-8, 20-14A, 19-8,

19-12, and 19-13B to 19-14A. There are indications that a fire burned in windows 19-14 and 19-14A. Since the window glass immediately below and to the left was broken, it is considered likely that the glass in the two windows closest to the south edge was also broken during the collapse of WTC 1. There appears to be minor façade damage immediately below windows 14 and 14A on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor, which are open. This damage is also visible in Figure 5–66. Windows 18-8 and 18-13B were also broken.

As discussed with regard to the south face, significant damage to the southwest corner of WTC 7 appeared on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor and extended downward. Figure 5–68 shows an enlargement of this area. There appears to be some damage to the façade extending north at least as far as window 13B. The glass in windows 17-7 and 17-13A is missing. On the 16<sup>th</sup> floor, the structural and façade damage appear to extend to column 14, and windows 12 to 13B are either broken or missing. The structural damage on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor also reaches as far as column 14, and windows 15-8, 15-11, 15-12, and 15-13B are broken.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, the structural damage extended further toward the north, reaching at least column 14, and there appears to be façade damage to column 13. Glass in windows 14-2, 14-11, and 14-12 was broken. The damage at the southwest corner of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor was similar to that on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor. The glass in window 13-11 was cracked, and the glass was broken in window 13-12. On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, the structural damage also appears to reach as far as column 14, with façade damage as far as column 13. Windows 12-10 and 12-12 were broken. On the 11<sup>th</sup> floor, the structural damage at the southwest corner extended beyond column 14, and the façade damage seemed to extend to column 13. All of the windows on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor cannot be seen clearly in Figure 5–86, but it is clear that the glass in windows 11-9, 11-11, and 11-12 was broken.

Figure 5–69 provides a close-up view of the damage to the southwest corner below the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. On floors 8 through 10, this damage extended beyond column 14, with columns 14, 14A, and 15 clearly severed above the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. Façade damage reached at least as far as column 13. The extent of damage on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor is unclear, but it does appear that at a minimum façade damage reached as far as column 13. In Figure 5–69, broken glass is visible in windows 10-10 to 10-13, 9-10 to 9-13, 8-12 to 8-13, and 7-12 to 7-13.

Figure 5–87 shows the lower portion of the WTC 7 west face from the corner of Barclay Street and Washington Street, looking south down Washington Street sometime around or prior to 12 p.m. Figure 5–25 was taken from roughly the same location. A great deal of debris is evident on Washington Street. In particular, a steel panel section can be seen embedded in the ground near the southwest corner of WTC 7. This panel section was also visible in the aerial photograph reproduced in Figure 5–61. There is another panel section lying on its side in the street near the Verizon Building. Additional steel can be seen piled up on Vesey Street beyond the buildings. On September 11, the Verizon Building was undergoing renovation and scaffolding was present on the east side. Some of the supports are still standing, but most of the scaffolding has collapsed, contributing to the debris lying in the street.

The portion of Figure 5–87 showing the west face of WTC 7 is enlarged in Figure 5–88. The façade damage on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor extends at least as far as window 13A. Façade damage is also evident on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floors extending to at least column 14. Window glass or louvers are broken or missing for windows 9-6, 9-7, 9-10 to the south edge on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, for windows 8-6, 8-8, and 8-10 to the south edge on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, and for windows 7-5 and 7-9 to the south edge on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. On the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, most of the windows contained louvers. All seem to be in place except for windows 14 and 14A near the southwest corner. On the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, there is no indication that any louvers were broken.



**Figure 5–87. Cropped photograph of a partial view of the west face of WTC 7 looking down Washington Street between WTC 7 on the left and the Verizon Building on the right.**

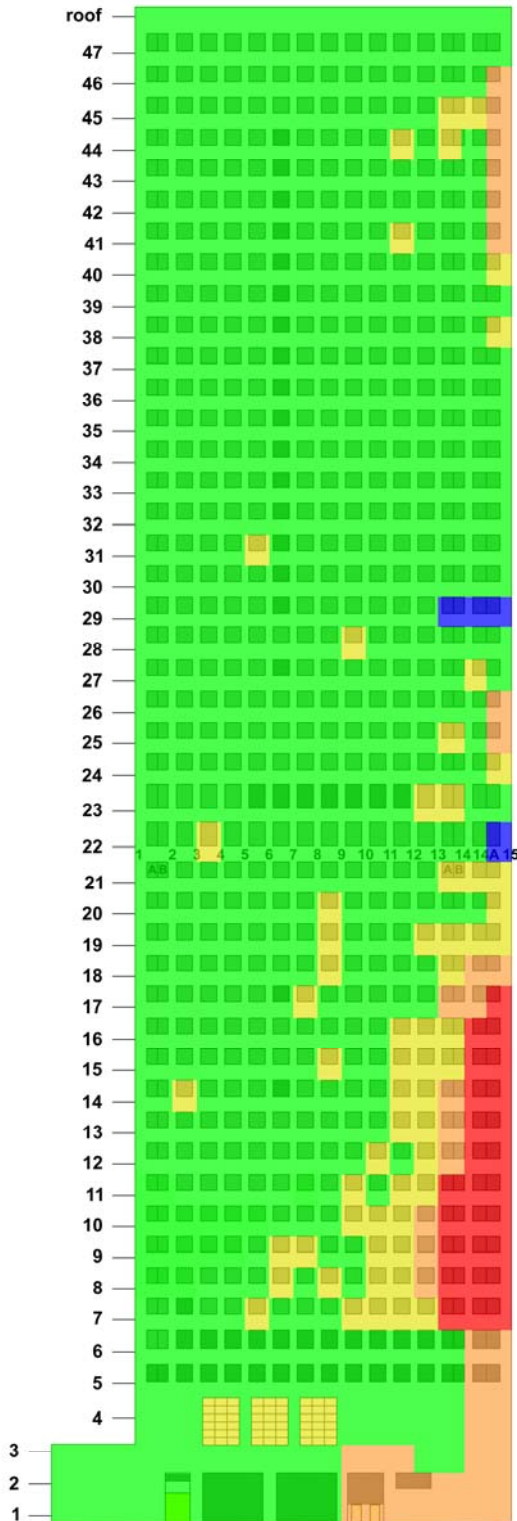
The time is unknown, but the shadows suggest that it was before noon.



**Figure 5–88. Enlarged view of the west side of WTC 7 from Figure 5–87. The intensity levels have been adjusted, and floor numbers have been added.**

Some minor façade damage is visible on the southwest corner extending from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor down to the ground. A section of granite was dislodged above the doorway, just to the south of the center of the face. See Figure 5–26 for the configuration in this area. To the left of this doorway, it appears that the underlying truss that held the granite was partially dislodged. Some of the screens in the large windows near the center of the face on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors were removed, but this is the only evidence of damage to this part of the face.

A diagram summarizing the observed damage to the west face of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–89. This diagram reflects the damage observations from the south face for the southwest corner near the top floors and from the 17<sup>th</sup> floor down to the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. The extent of broken windows on the lower floors suggests that the force associated with the event that removed this wedge was large.



**Figure 5–89. Observed damage on the west face of WTC 7 following the collapse of WTC 1 is shown.**

Damage is color coded as follows: green (■)-- no visible damage, yellow (■) – window glass broken out, orange (■) – granite and underlying truss damage, and red (■) – damage to outer-perimeter structural steel, and blue (■) – not visible.

### **Absence of Damage to the East and North Faces of WTC 7**

Not surprisingly, given the visual evidence concerning the distribution of the large sections of falling debris from WTC 1, no window breakage, façade damage, or structural damage were observed on the east and north faces of WTC 7 following the collapse of WTC 1. Figure 5–22 showed that there was a large amount of small debris deposited on West Broadway between the Post Office Building and WTC 7. The only broken glass is the center window on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, to the right of column 36. Investigation interviews indicated that this window was broken by people who were trapped on this floor when WTC 1 collapsed (Chapter 6). Video clips show one of these people inside an open window (8-42A) on the eastern edge of the north face.

Figure 5–90

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At the times when Figure 5–22 and **Figure 5–90** were taken, there were no indications of fire or smoke on the east face of WTC 7. Numerous people can be seen on West Broadway immediately below the face.

Review of various images of the north face of WTC 7 revealed that the face appeared undamaged, with the exception of two locations on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, where window glass was broken out prior to the time when fires began breaking windows on the face. A view of the undamaged lower nine floors at the northwest corner was shown in Figure 5–87. As noted above, window 8-42A was open on the northeast corner of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. This window is visible in Figure 5–91. This cropped image is taken from the same photograph as Figure 5–12. The other open window observed on this side of the building was 8-47B. This open window is visible in Figure 5–30 above the left hand edge of the fire burning on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. This window was also broken out by people trapped in the building after WTC 1 collapsed.



**Figure 5–91. Cropped photograph showing the east side of the lower floors of the north face and an oblique view of the east face. Image intensities were adjusted and floor numbers were added.**

### 5.5.3 Summary of Debris Damage to WTC 7 Based on Visual Data

WTC 7 suffered structural damage to its southwest quadrant due to heavy debris falling from WTC 1 during its collapse. Most of the damage was on the south face. It is possible that some additional interior damage occurred, since portions of the face were hidden by smoke or nearby buildings. Damage to the west face primarily occurred along the southern edge. The north and east faces apparently did not sustain damage that could be detected visually.

The damage estimates were based on the observed exterior damage to the south and west faces of the building from the visual evidence discussed above (Figures 5-83 and 5-89).<sup>19</sup> In addition, interview accounts by individuals who were in or around WTC 7, documented damage to the building at 130 Liberty Street (Figure 2-25), and engineering judgment were used to develop estimates of interior structural damage between the exterior walls and the core.

Figure 5-92 and Figure 5-93 show elevation views of the estimated interior damage below Floor 18 in the southwest region, looking from the south and the west directions, respectively. Figure 5-94 through Figure 5-101 show schematics of the damage estimates for each floor, from Floors 5 to 17, and Floor 44 to the roof.

Along the south face, the interior damage was estimated to extend from the south exterior wall toward the core, with increasing interior damage of the south tenant floor between the south face and the core, from Floor 17 down to Floor 7. The core columns and girders were assumed to be structurally undamaged. The following floor damage was estimated at the locations where the exterior columns were damaged:

- For Floors 15 through 17, a small portion of the floor span between the south face and the core.
- For Floors 12 through 14, half of the floor span between the south face and the core.
- For Floors 7 through 11, the full floor span between the south face and the core.
- For Floors 5 and 6, the full floor span between the south face and the core between exterior Columns 19 and 20.

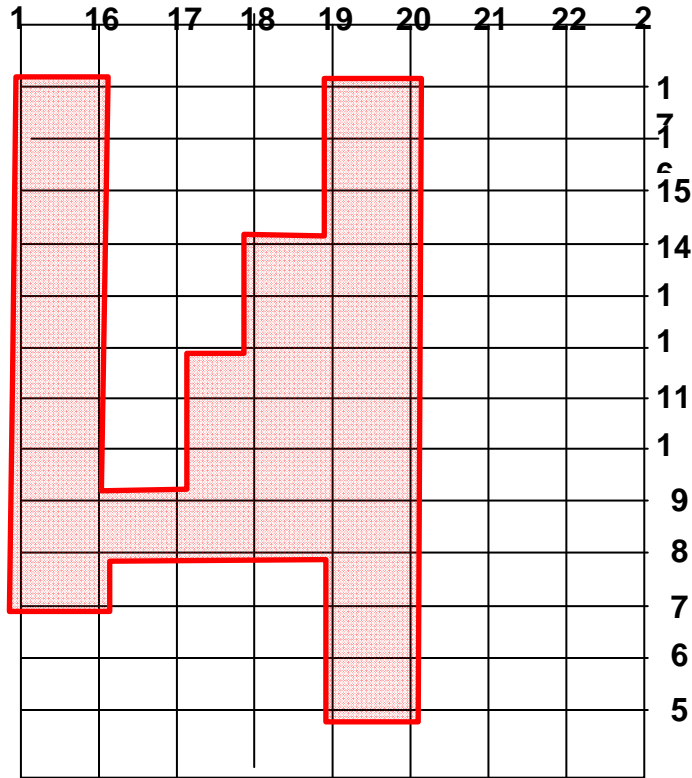
For Columns 14A, 15, and 16 at the southwest corner, the following floor damage was estimated:

- For Floor 6 and Floors 10 through 17, a small portion of the floor span between the exterior and the core.
- For Floors 8 and 9, the full floor span between the south and west faces and the core.

Global structural response analyses are presented in Chapter 12 to simulate the collapse of WTC 7 following the damage due to debris impact and fires. These analyses included the damage estimates to the southwest quadrant of the building due to debris impact presented in Figures 5-92 through 5-101.

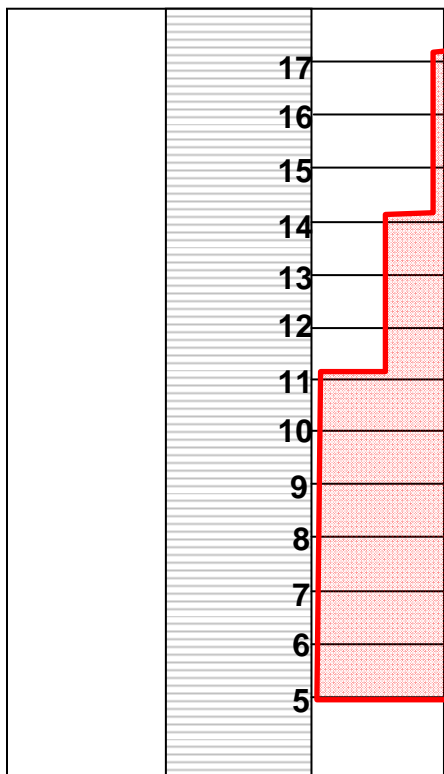
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<sup>19</sup> Note that Figures 5-92 through 5-99 were developed based on a preliminary estimate of Figures 5-83 and 5-89. As such, there are minor discrepancies between the two sets of figures. Such discrepancies did not have any significant effect on the results of the structural collapse analyses in Chapter 12.



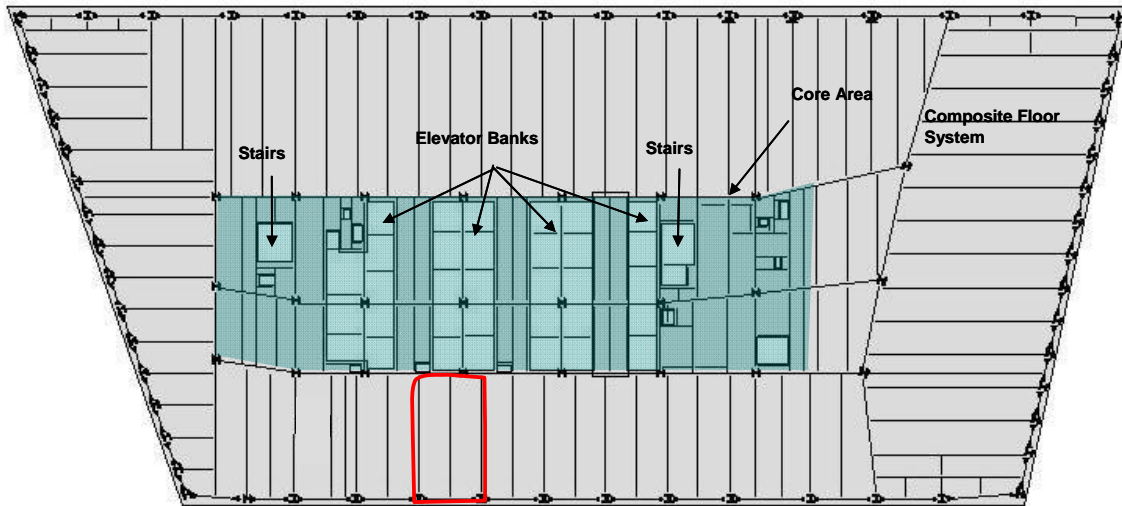
**Figure 5-92 Elevation view of the estimated debris impact damage for the structural analysis of WTC 7, viewed from the south.**

The numbers across the top denote the column locations; the numbers on the right identify the locations of the floor slabs.

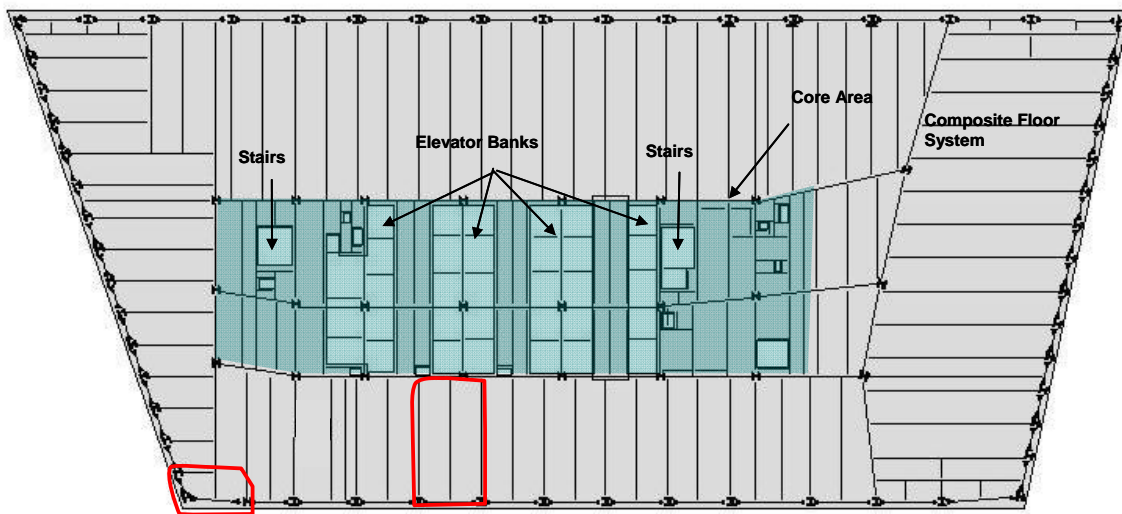


**Figure 5-93 Elevation view of the estimated depth of interior debris impact damage to the south face of WTC 7, viewed from the west.**

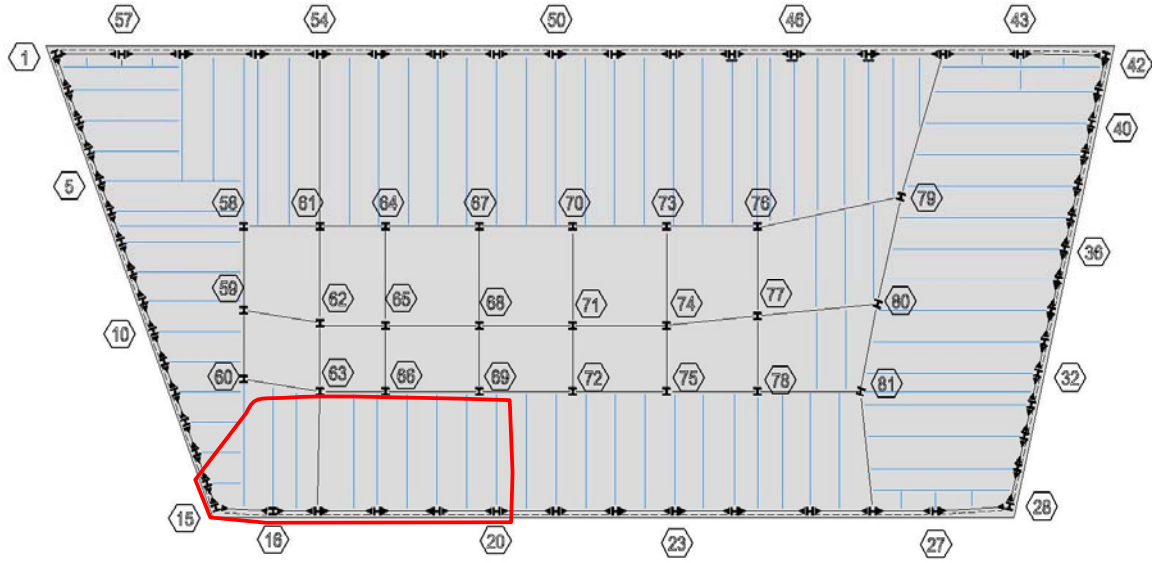
The right side represents the south façade of WTC 7 and the shaded area represents the building core.



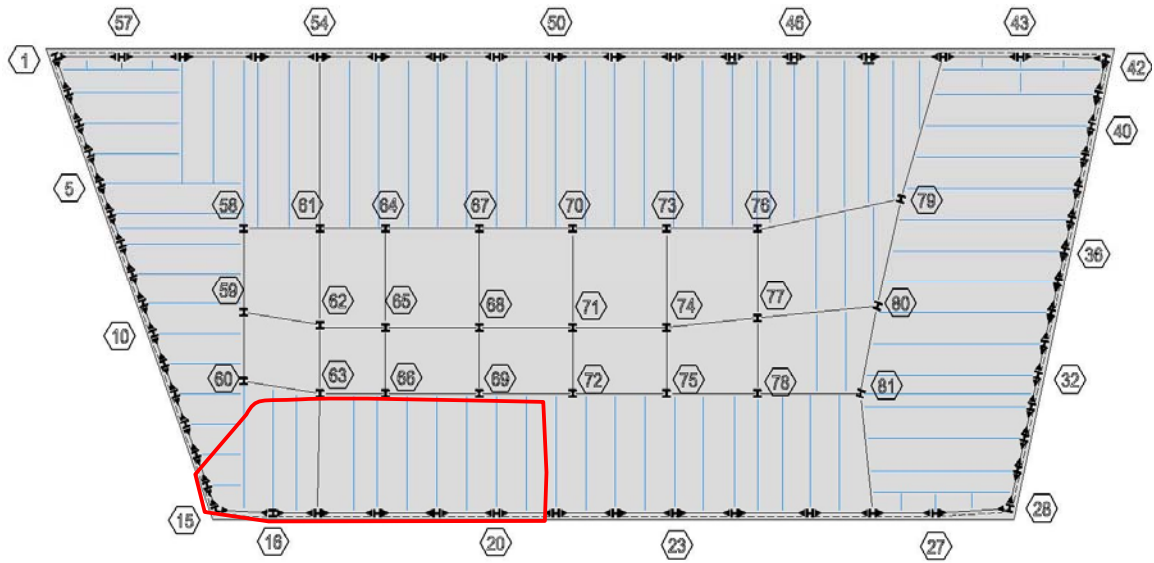
**Figure 5-94 Estimated debris impact damage to Floors 5 and 6 of WTC 7.**  
Marked area indicates removed columns and floor segments.



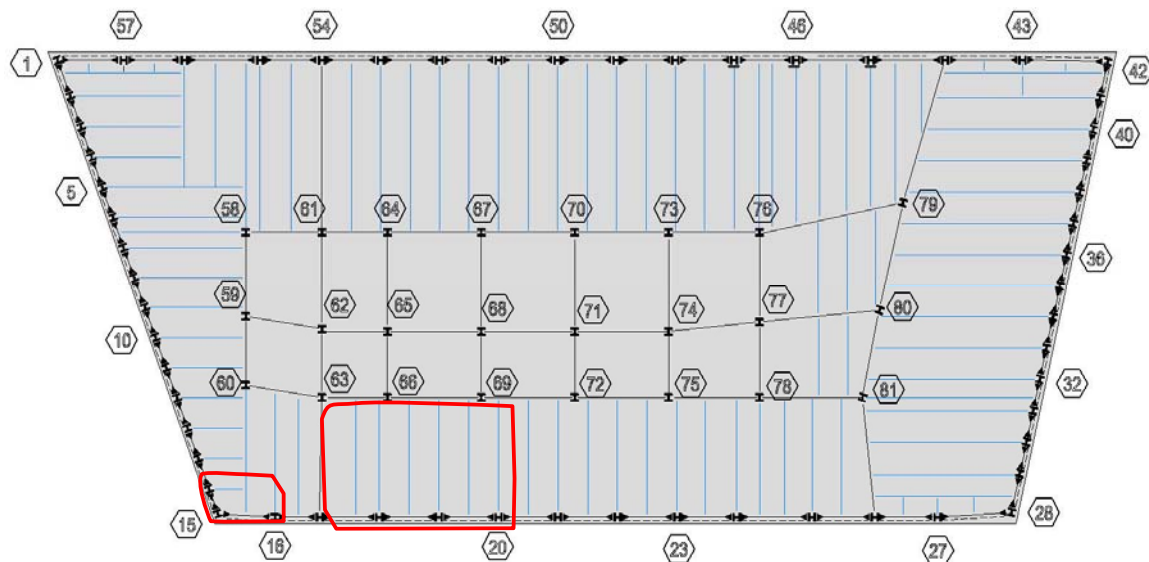
**Figure 5-95 Estimated debris impact damage to Floor 7 of WTC 7.**  
Marked areas indicate removed columns and floor segments.



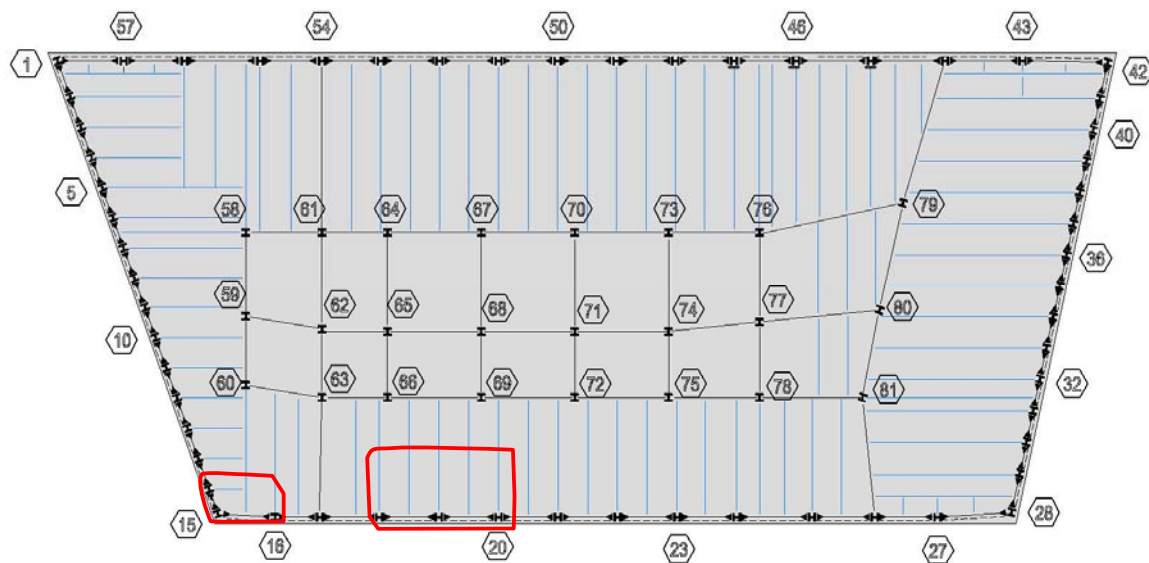
**Figure 5–96 Estimated debris impact damage to Floor 8 of WTC 7.**  
Marked area indicates removed columns and floor segments.



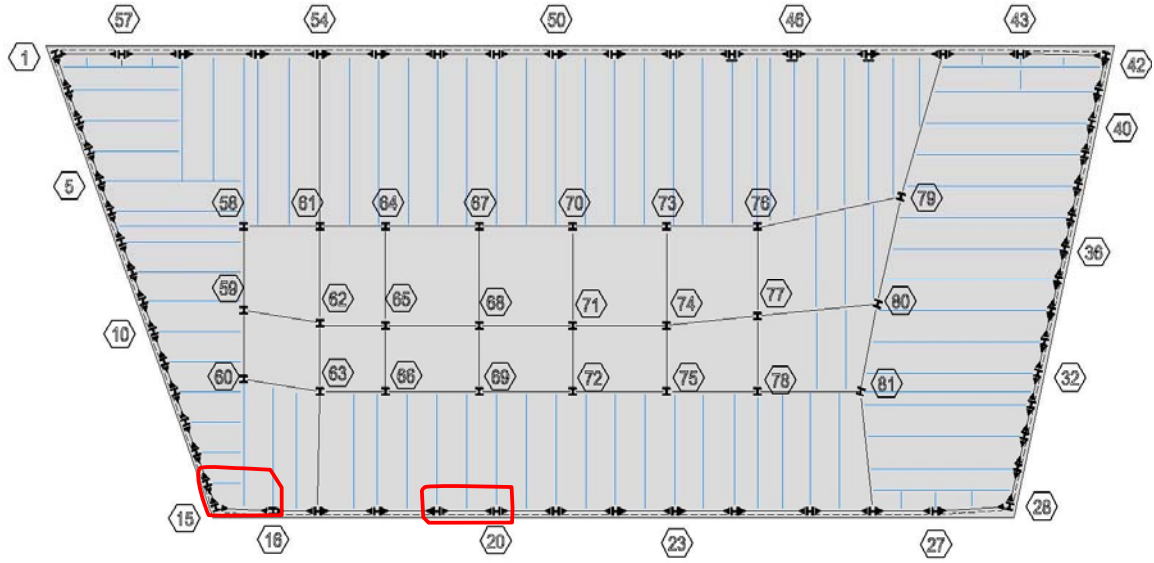
**Figure 5–97 Estimated debris impact damage to Floor 9 of WTC 7.**  
Marked area indicates removed columns and floor segments.



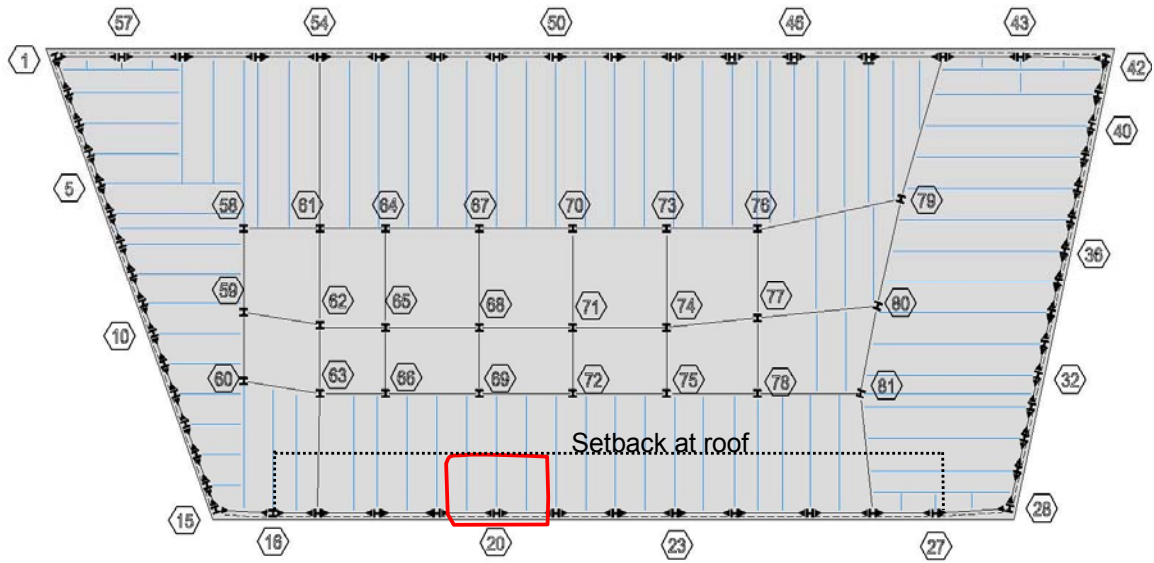
**Figure 5-98 Estimated debris impact damage to Floors 10 and 11 of WTC 7.**  
Marked areas indicate removed columns and floor segments.



**Figure 5-99 Estimated debris impact damage to Floors 12 to 14 of WTC 7.**  
Marked areas indicate removed columns and floor segments.



**Figure 5–100 Estimated debris impact damage to Floors 15 to 17 of WTC 7.**  
Marked areas indicate removed columns and floor segments.



**Figure 5–101 Estimated debris impact damage to Floor 44 to the roof of WTC 7.**  
Marked areas indicate removed columns and floor segments.

## **5.6 DEVELOPMENT AND SPREAD OF FIRES IN WTC 7**

### **5.6.1 Introduction**

Fires were observed on multiple floors of WTC 7 between the times when WTC 1 collapsed at 10:28:22 a.m. and WTC 7 collapsed at 5:20:52 p.m. It is important to consider whether the ignition of such a number of separate fires was to be expected, based on observations of fires in the towers and ignition behavior at other locations around the WTC site. This point will be discussed in Section, 5.6.2. In Section 5.6.3 observations concerning fire development and spread within WTC 7 will be discussed with an emphasis on the time behavior. In the final subsection, the fires in WTC 7 are characterized in terms of a number of fire maps designed to provide concise snapshots of the fires at particular times.

### **5.6.2 Ignition of Fires Following Collapse of the World Trade Center Towers**

The time-dependent behavior of the fires that developed in the WTC towers was discussed extensively in NIST NCSTAR 1-5A. Particularly relevant to this discussion is the observed fire distributions at the times when the towers collapsed. At the time WTC 2 collapsed at 9:58:59 a.m., a large fire had developed along the west side of its south face on the 80<sup>th</sup> floor. Flames were pushed out of open windows in this area as the collapse began. Smaller fires were burning at multiple locations in WTC 2 on floors ranging from the 79<sup>th</sup> to the 83<sup>rd</sup> floors on the north face. At the time of collapse, fires on the east of WTC 2 face seemed to have died down with the exception of a long-burning fire in the northeast corner on the 81<sup>st</sup> floor. Fires had not appeared on the west face by the time of collapse.

Subsequent to the collapse of WTC 2, numerous fires were reported to the south and southwest of the WTC site. There is some ambiguity as to ignition sources, since some of these fires could have been ignited by burning materials released when WTC 1 collapsed 29 min later. Large fires grew in the ruins of WTC 3 (Marriott Hotel), which was adjacent to both WTC 1 and WTC 2. (See Figure 5–2.) WTC 4 was heavily damaged by debris from WTC 2, and the remaining structure subsequently burned. Fires also grew on multiple floors in buildings located one block south of WTC 2 at 90 West Street and 130 Cedar Lane. Fires apparently did not develop in the Bankers Trust Building located just to the east at 130 Liberty Street. Fires were reported at an apartment house located to the southwest of the WTC site on the corner of Liberty Street and South End Avenue. Numerous vehicles parked along West Street to the south of the WTC site were consumed by fire. The locations of all of these fires seem to be related to the locations of active fires in WTC 2 at the time of its collapse.

In Section 5.5.1, several images showing superficial damage to the south face of WTC 7 due to the collapse of WTC 2 were reproduced. It was also noted that a videographer entered the lobby of WTC 7 from the south and filmed inside. Even though glass panes were broken at several locations on the south face, there was no indication that fires had been ignited in the building immediately following the collapse of WTC 2.

The fires in WTC 1 were more widespread and intense at the time of its collapse than those in WTC 2. When WTC 1 collapsed, there were several large fires burning in the tower. The most extensive fire on the north face was located on the west side of the 92<sup>nd</sup> floor. Somewhat smaller fires were present immediately above on the 95<sup>th</sup> floor and on the east side of the 92<sup>nd</sup> floor. As the collapse of WTC 1 proceeded, it generated a pressure pulse that pushed flames from internally burning areas out of adjacent



windows, thus revealing the extent of the fires. This is evident in Figure 5–102 which shows the upper floors of WTC 1 roughly one second after the collapse started. The significant fire on the west side of the 92<sup>nd</sup> floor is evident. The expelled flames formed a large fireball before extinguishing.



**Figure 5–102. Cropped photograph showing the north face of WTC 1 at 10:28:23 a.m.**

The image has been enhanced by adjusting the intensity levels. Column and floor numbers have been added.

The major area of intense burning at the time of collapse of WTC 1 was in the southeast quadrant, where large fires were present on a number of floors. Flames were also expelled from nearby windows in this area as the collapse started. In addition to the significant fires in the northwest and southwest quadrants, there was a fire burning on the west face at the 104<sup>th</sup> floor toward the south end. Numerous smaller burning areas were present at other locations, ranging from the 92<sup>nd</sup> floor to the 99<sup>th</sup> floor.

The fires in WTC 1 were likely burning on a wide variety of materials typical of those found in office buildings. These fuels include office paper, furnishings, carpeting, and drapes. Some extinguishing of these burning materials would have occurred during the collapse of the tower, but it is possible that a large number of potential ignition sources (i.e., fire brands) might have survived and been widely distributed with the dust- and debris-laden air around the buildings at the WTC site. In Figure 5–103, it is evident that these dust- and debris-laden flows were many stories tall and that they flowed around WTC 7 and reached well beyond this building.



**Figure 5–103.**  
Photograph showing the dust-laden flows spreading away from WTC 1 following its collapse.

It was taken 32 s after the start of the collapse.

The large dust clouds generated by the collapse of WTC 1 hid the lower portions of WTC 7 from view for over 20 min following the collapse. However, as time passed, the dust began to settle, and the faces became less obscured. Figure 5–104 shows a view of the north face of WTC 7 taken at 11:28:15 a.m., i.e., close to one hour after the collapse of WTC 1. Even though some light dust is evident in front of the face, it is possible to discern the base of the building. There is no sign of fire or heavy smoke on the portion of the north face that is visible.

In Figure 5–104, there appears to be a heavy smoke column rising from an area just to the north and west of WTC 7. The location of the smoke relative to the buildings in the area suggests the smoke was coming from or near West Broadway.



**Figure 5–104.**  
**Cropped**  
**photograph**  
**showing the north**  
**face of WTC 7, shot**  
**at 11:28:15 a.m.**  
**from the upper**  
**story of a nearby**  
**building looking**  
**down Greenwich.**  
The intensity levels  
have been adjusted.

A view of WTC 7 from the west, taken roughly 15 minutes earlier, is shown in Figure 5–105. The upper portion of WTC 7 is visible at the top of the photograph. A heavy smoke plume was passing in front of the Verizon Building at this time. A second smoke plume can be seen beyond the Verizon Building to the north of WTC 7. It is likely that this smoke is coming from the same general area as the plume in Figure 5–104. Photographs taken from the same location show that the heavy smoke to the west of the Verizon Building was present as early as 10:54 a.m. and was observed as late as 11:19 a.m. By 12:10 a.m., the two smoke plumes visible in Figure 5–105 had dissipated, and the areas to the north of the Verizon Building and WTC 7 could be easily seen through a light veil of smoke and/or dust.



**Figure 5–105.**  
Cropped photograph showing the west face of WTC 7, shot at 11:13:51 a.m. from New Jersey looking across the Hudson River. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

Visual evidence indicates that the smoke plumes seen in Figure 5–104 and Figure 5–105 originated from vehicles that were ignited at numerous locations following the collapse of WTC 1. Several burned out vehicles can be seen on West Broadway between the east side of WTC 7 and the Post Office Building in **Figure 5–90**. Review of several photographs showed that there were at least six burned automobiles, two postal trucks, and a fire truck on this single block. Another view of West Broadway taken from one block further north near its corner with Park Place is shown in Figure 5–106. Multiple burned vehicles, including a bus, several cars, and trucks, are visible on the street between Park Place and Barclay Street. A second photograph taken much earlier from a location slightly closer to Barclay Street is shown Figure 5–107. In addition to the vehicles visible in these two images, other photographs of the area show that there were several additional burned out automobiles closer to Barclay Street. Nearly every vehicle on this block was ignited.



**Figure 5–106.**  
**Photograph taken**  
**looking down West**  
**Broadway towards WTC 7**  
**from its corner with Park**  
**Place.**

The burning buildings in the background are WTC 5 and WTC 6. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

**Figure 5–107.** Photograph taken  
 looking down West Broadway  
 towards WTC 7 from near its  
 corner with Park Place.

The intensity levels have been adjusted.



Several fire hoses are visible on the street in Figure 5–107. One of the photographers who provided images for the Investigation reported that he was a fireman visiting from out of town and had joined with a FDNY engine company to extinguish the burning vehicles along West Broadway. They started at the corner of Park Place and West Broadway and moved south until they reached Vesey Street. Based on the smoke plume observations, this must have taken place between roughly 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

A video crew managed to reach the area of West Broadway and Barclay Street while the vehicles were still burning. Figure 5–108 shows a frame taken from a video recorded looking from the west of the West Broadway/Barclay Street intersection. The exact time is unknown, but it was likely between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. Multiple vehicles were burning at this time. This image provides an indication of the burning intensities and smoke generation by these vehicle fires.

Other images show that fires burned a few vehicles located to the north of WTC 7 on Barclay Street and a large number of vehicles located in a large parking lot located to the west of West Street between Vesey Street and Murray Street (See Figure 5–2). The latter vehicle fires were likely at least partly responsible for the smoke observed rising from the north of and to the west of the Verizon Building in Figure 5–105.



**Figure 5–108. Frame taken from a video clip filmed near the corner of West Broadway and Barclay Street showing flames burning on a number of vehicles.**

The time could not be accurately determined. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

The number and wide distribution of vehicle and building fires ignited following the collapses of WTC 1 and WTC 2 confirm that substantial numbers of burning sources capable of igniting fires reached the ground and were widely distributed by the dust- and debris-laden air flows. Since fires were observed on the ground surrounding WTC 7, it is possible that potential ignition sources might have entered WTC 7 through openings created in the south and west faces of the building during the collapses of the towers. NIST found no evidence to confirm this possibility, but the available data suggest that this was highly likely.

### 5.6.3 Visual Observations of Fire Growth and Spread in WTC 7

#### General Comments

General characteristics of the imagery available for characterizing the fires that developed in WTC 7 following the collapse of WTC 1 were discussed in Section 5.4, along with the procedures for recording observations. It was noted that the available imagery was limited to such an extent that it was difficult to develop detailed timelines for burning on the four faces of the building.

In the following sections, the available imagery is reviewed and used to deduce as much as possible about the ignition, growth, and spread of the fires in WTC 7 prior to its collapse at 5:20:52 p.m. Detailed maps of the fires derived from these images are collected in Section 5.6.4.

#### Fires above the 14<sup>th</sup> Floor

Prior to 12:10 p.m., there was no evidence of fire on the upper floors of WTC 7. Between 12:10 p.m. and 2:10 p.m., the only fires directly or indirectly observed were on floors 19, 22, 29, and 30.

The earliest visual evidence showing flames in WTC 7 is a video clip of the southwest corner that was recorded between 12:10 a.m. and 12:25 p.m. Figure 5–109 is a frame from this video. Flames are visible in open windows 22-14A and 22-15A. Some smoke is visible flowing from both of these windows, with

the heaviest flow on the south face. Windows to the north of window 22-14A were intact at that time. In this close up it is easy to identify column 14 through window 23-13B on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor and column 14A through windows 21-14 and 21-14A on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor.



**Figure 5-109. Frame from a video clip showing the southwest corner of WTC 7 around the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor.**

The clip was recorded from West Street near its corner with Vesey Street between 12:10 p.m. and 12:25 p.m. Intensity levels have been adjusted, and floor and window numbers have been added.

**Figure 5-110. Cropped photograph showing a portion of the west face of WTC 7 near the south edge at 12:27:30 p.m.  $\pm$  1 s from near the corner of Vesey and West Streets.**

The Verizon Building is in the foreground. The intensity levels were adjusted, and floor numbers have been added.



A larger area of the west face near the south edge is visible in the photograph shown in Figure 5–110, which was taken shortly after Figure 5–109 at 12:27:30 p.m. At this time flames were not evident in window 22-14A, but light smoke continued to flow from the window. Higher up on the face, smoke was coming from the six adjacent open windows 29-11 to 29-14A on the 29<sup>th</sup> floor, with heavy flames filling windows 29-11 and 29-12. As discussed in Section 5.5.2, the condition of windows 29-13A to 29-14A immediately following the collapse of WTC 1 could not be determined, while the glass was intact in windows 29-11 and 29-12. This suggests that the fire burning on this floor had opened windows 29-11 and 29-12 by 12:27:30 p.m.

Heavy smoke was also coming from open windows 30-13A to 30-14A on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor at this time. This suggests that a fire was also burning on this floor, but flames are not apparent in Figure 5–110. In a long distance view from the same short video clip from which Figure 5–109 was taken, these windows appeared to be intact. This indicates that the fire burning on this floor broke the glass from these windows during the short time period between the times when Figure 5–109 and Figure 5–110 were taken.

The appearance of the smoke on the south side of WTC 7 in Figure 5–110 demonstrates a difficulty that plagued attempts to use smoke to provide qualitative information about fire behavior. There appears to be relatively light-colored smoke on the south face at all of the floors visible in the image, while much denser and darker, rapidly rising smoke appeared to be flowing from windows near the west edge of the 30<sup>th</sup> floor. Due to the wind direction, it was common for smoke to “bank up” against the south face. For this reason, it was usually not possible to differentiate different types of smoke or to identify smoke source locations on the south face. Viewing difficulties resulting from the large amount of smoke on the south face were discussed earlier.

Figure 5–111 shows another view of the fires at the southwest corner on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> floors taken within a few minutes of Figure 5–110. At this time flames were visible on both floors. The appearance of the fires on the 29<sup>th</sup> floor is similar in both images. However, unlike in Figure 5–110, intense flames are visible on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor. Flames are apparent in windows 30-14, 30-14A, 30-15, and 30-16A to 30-16C. In the video it is clear that flames were coming from multiple windows on the south face. This is an indication that a fully developed flashed over fire was present in the corner of this floor at this time.



**Figure 5–111. Frame from a video clip showing fires near the southwest corner of WTC 7 on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> floors around 12:28 a.m. ± 3 min.**

The clip was recorded from West Street near its corner with Vesey Street. Intensity levels have been adjusted, and floor numbers have been added.



Photographs show that by 12:47 p.m., flames were no longer evident inside any of the open windows on the 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> floors, and the fires had apparently not progressed further north on the west face, since no additional windows had been broken out. Taken together, these observations suggest that intense fires which grew in the southwest corners of these floors starting around noon had died down by 12:45 a.m. after burning intensely for a short period of time.

Photographs taken around 12:47 showed that the smaller fire seen earlier in window 22-14A had also died down, as can be seen in Figure 5-66. This fire had not grown sufficiently large to break additional windows along the west face. Interestingly, in a video clip shot just before 1:30 p.m. smoke is visible flowing from window 22-14. Apparently, a dormant fire had eventually grown large enough to break the glass in this window. Figure 5-67 shows a view of the west face taken from above much later, between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. It appears that the four windows, 22-13A to 22-14A, near the south edge were open at that time. Apparently, the fire on this floor spread very slowly to the north before dying out. Distinct smoke marks are visible above windows 19-14 and 19-14A in Figure 5-66, which was taken at 12:47:40, indicating that a fire had been present in the southwest corner of this floor prior to this time.

There are no images showing flames or other evidence of active fires above the 14<sup>th</sup> floor after about 1:00 p.m. No images showing flames on the south face or near the south edge of the west face of any floor of WTC 7 are available at times after 1:30 p.m.

### **Fires on or below the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor prior to 1:30 p.m.**

There are no photographs or videos of any fires on the lower floors of WTC 7 before 1:30 p.m., although a witness saw a fire on the southwest corner of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor at about 12:15 p.m., before being rescued (Chapter 6). In the videos and photographs of WTC 7 taken from West Street between 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m., smoke can often be seen flowing along the outer walls of lower floors of the west face at the south edge. Since the wind was blowing from the north and the visual evidence indicates no substantial fires were burning on or near Washington Street, this suggests that fires were burning on lower floors of the west face during this time, but it was not possible to identify windows where the smoke originated.

### **Fires on or below the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor on the West Face, 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

Images showing the initial spread of fire across floors on the west side of WTC 7 are very limited. Figure 5-112 shows a view of the west face taken in the early afternoon. Based on shadows apparent on the face the time is estimated to be between 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. This photograph should be compared with Figure 5-88, which shows the same area of the face at an earlier time.

In Figure 5-112 smoke is visible coming from open windows 7-5 and 7-7 on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, and windows 7-6 and 7-8 appear to be open as well. In the earlier photograph, no smoke was evident coming from windows on this floor, and glass was in place in each of the open windows mentioned above. Light smoke is also visible coming from the louvers in window 7-2 in Figure 5-112. The glass in windows 7-1A, 7-1B, 7-3 and 7-4 was still intact when the photograph was taken. The presence of smoke and additional broken windows indicates that a fire had progressed toward the north edge of the west face on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor by the time the photograph in Figure 5-112 was taken. Even though a fire was present that was capable of breaking out window glass, no flames are visible. It is possible that flames were present

earlier and had died away or that the prevailing wind on the face pushed the flames into the building and that the smoke and possibly flames exited primarily through openings on the south face.

Smoke is also visible coming from open windows at a few other locations on the west face in Figure 5–112. Relatively heavy smoke appears to be coming from an open window on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor near the northwest



**Figure 5–112. Cropped photograph shot from near the corner of Washington and Barclay Streets shows lower floors on the west side of WTC 7 between 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. The intensity levels have been adjusted, and floor numbers have been added.**

corner. This window was likely 8-10 or 8-11. Smoke is also coming from a window on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor near the same corner. There does not appear to be significant smoke flow from other open windows at this time.

Figure 5–113 shows a portion of the aerial photograph in Figure 5–64, enlarged to emphasize the areas on lower floors near the northwest corner of WTC 7. This image was estimated to have been taken between 2:15 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. by relating it to other photographs taken earlier that show fires on the east side of WTC 7 and the south side of WTC 5 and by using shadows at various locations around the site.



**Figure 5–113.**  
**Enlargement of a**  
**portion of the**  
**photograph shown in**  
**Figure 5–64**  
**emphasizing areas on**  
**the lower floors of WTC**  
**7 near the northwest**  
**corner.**

The time is estimated as being between 2:15 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. The roof line of the building in the lower left hand corner is 123 Barclay Street.

Heavy smoke is visible passing over the west face, starting at a point close to the north edge of the building. This smoke appears to be coming from windows on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> floor. It likely was coming from windows on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, since fire appeared on the north side of this floor shortly after Figure 5–113 was taken, and there were indications of earlier burning to the south of this location on this floor. Note that there were no visual signs of fire or broken windows on the north face at that time.

Chapter 3 reports that the area between the west face and the core on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor was not partitioned and had been filled with workstations. However, several years earlier, the people who occupied this space had been moved to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, and the 7<sup>th</sup> floor space had been turned over to Silverstein Properties, which intended to use it for storage (Chapter). The relatively slow fire spread and apparently low intensity fires observed may indicate that there was limited combustible material in this space.

### **Fires on or below the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor on the East Face, 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

As discussed earlier, only one open window was apparent on the east face of WTC 7 during the period shortly following the collapse of WTC 1. However, at some point during the early afternoon, fires appeared on the south side of the east face and began to spread to the north. Figure 5–114 shows the

earliest photograph in the database with fire on the east face. It was taken at 2:08:28 p.m. Flames are present on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, and windows appear to be open on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. Due to the steep angle, it is difficult to identify exactly in which windows the fires were located.

Figure 5–115 shows a less oblique view of the fires on the east face taken at 2:11:09 p.m. An intense fire with external flaming covers windows 12-29 to 12-34 on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. Videos taken from the same location indicated that these fires grew substantially in the roughly 2½ min period between Figure 5–114 and Figure 5–115. Windows 12-35 and 12-36 are open, but no flames are apparent. The remaining windows, including 12-27A and 12-27B at the south end of the floor, still have glass in place.

The heavy smoke coming from the windows on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor rose rapidly and was pulled toward the north. This movement was due to the wind flow over the north face of the building, which created a low pressure region near the northeast corner.

The floor plan for the 12<sup>th</sup> floor (Chapter 3) indicates that this area was divided into a number of walled offices, including one in the southeast corner with partitioned walls between columns 27 and 28 and near column 29. It is likely that these office walls slowed fire spread into the southeast corner. The floor plan suggests that fire may have spread onto the east face from the south by moving along a corridor.



**Figure 5–114. Oblique view of the east face of WTC 7, taken at 2:08:28 p.m. ± 1 s from West Broadway near its corner with Park Place.**

Floor numbers have been added.

Two windows, 11-29 and 11-30, were also open on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor at 2:11:09 p.m. Upon closer inspection, it is possible to identify a dull red glow through these open windows. The smoke patterns visible above these windows indicate that a more intense fire had burned there earlier and had subsequently died down. The floor plan for the 11<sup>th</sup> floor (Chapter 3) was similar to that for the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, and interior walls were present on either side of these two windows. Apparently, these walls slowed the fire spread into enclosed spaces on either side.

Over the next several minutes, the fire on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor broke additional window glass. Between 2:13:04 p.m. and 2:14:09 p.m., windows 12-28A and 12-28B opened at the south edge of the face, and flames were observed through these windows shortly afterward. Figure 5–116 is a frame taken from a video showing the fires on the east face of WTC 7. The exact time when it was shot is unknown, but it was during a 12 min period starting at 2:15 p.m., based on the appearance of the face compared to photographs for which times were accurately determined. Intense flames were coming from multiple windows on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. The arrow indicates a large section of window pane that suddenly fell out of the frame for window 12-37. Heavy smoke poured from the window after it opened, but flames were not immediately evident.

Several video clips showing the east face of WTC 7 are available between 2:15 p.m. and 2:29 p.m. The exact times for these clips are not known. In the clip shot immediately after the one shown in Figure 5–116, window 11-32 on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor had already broken, and the glass in window 11-33 suddenly fell outward. Low intensity flames appeared in window 11-32 shortly afterwards. By the time the next clip started, windows 11-31 and 11-34 were open, and growing flames were visible through windows 11-31 to 11-34. In this clip, heavy smoke appeared, and flames erupted from window 11-34, likely an indication that flashover occurred at that time. Heavy smoke and flames continued to come from these four windows over the next several minutes.

**Figure 5–115. Cropped photograph showing fires on the east face of WTC 7 at 2:11:09 p.m. ± 1 s.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.





**Figure 5–116. Frame from a video showing a portion of the east face of WTC 7 between 2:15 p.m. and 2:27 p.m.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted, and column numbers are indicated.

The arrow indicates a large piece of glass falling from window 12-37.

Figure 5–117 is another photograph of the east face, taken at 2:28:43 p.m. On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, flames are visible in windows 12-28 to 12-36, with flame extension present from several windows. Heavy smoke was coming from window 12-37 at this time, but flames were not evident. In general, the fire intensity appeared to have declined since the image in Figure 5–116 was recorded. Note that no additional windows had opened on this floor since the time of Figure 5–116. The glass in window 12-38 has a different appearance than other intact windows to the north and appears to be darkened by smoke.

At 2:28:43 p.m., the number of open windows on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor had increased by one, since window 11-35 was now open. A check showed that the glass was still in place in this window when the last video clip of this face was recorded by the photographer. Interior flames were still visible in windows 11-31 to 11-34, but neither smoke nor flames were evident in open window 11-35. Windows 11-28A and 11-28B at the south edge still had glass in place.

The latest full view of the lower floors on the east face in the Investigation database is shown in Figure 5–118. The time for this image is not known, but it was likely several minutes later than the photograph reproduced in Figure 5–117. On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, window 12-37, which was open with a heavy smoke flow at 2:28:43 p.m., now has long extended flames, while window 12-38, which had darkened glass in place at 2:28:43 p.m., is now open with a heavy smoke flow. The glass in the four windows between window 12-38 and the north edge of the face appears to have been intact at this time. On the 11<sup>th</sup> floor, intense flames are jetting out of window 11-35. In Figure 5–117, this window was open, and interior fire was visible as an orange glow. At the later time, the glass in window 11-36, which was in place at 2:28:43 p.m., has been broken, and an interior fire can be seen through the open window.

The fires observed on the east sides of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors slowly spread to the north. The floor diagrams in Chapter 3 indicate that these fires were spreading through a series of enclosed offices located along the face.

Closer inspection of Figure 5–118 reveals that three windows appear to be open on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. The glass in window 13-31 is missing, while there appears to be fire visible in windows 13-33 and 13-34. These are the first indications that a fire may be growing on the east side of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, in addition to

those evident on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. Since windows 13-28A to 13-30 seem to be intact, it is possible that these fires spread in the interior from fires on the south side of the building or that the window breakage and fire ignitions on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor were due to heat transfer from flames extending upward from open windows on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor.

In Figure 5–118, no smoke or fire is evident on floors below the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. This includes the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors, where intake and exhaust louvers were located. (See floor diagrams in Chapter 3.) It is possible to see windows along the south edge of the building up to the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor. There are no indications of open windows between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> floors.



**Figure 5–117.** Photograph showing fires on the east face of WTC 7 at 2:28:43 p.m. ± 1 s. The intensity levels have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.

Only partial and long distance views of the east face were available after the time when the photograph in Figure 5–118 was taken. While not known definitely, it seems likely that the immediate area around WTC 7 was more securely cordoned off by security personnel starting around 2:30 p.m. due to the growth of large fires on the east face and later on the north face. If so, potential photographers and videographers would have had a more difficult time reaching locations where this face could be observed.



**Figure 5–118. Photograph of the east face of WTC 7 taken at some time after 2:28:43 p.m. from near the corner of West Broadway and Barclay Street.**

The building to the left is the U.S. Post Office. The intensity levels have been adjusted, and column numbers have been added.

**Summary: Fires on or below the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor, 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

The discussion thus far has shown that around 2:30 p.m. in the afternoon, fires were burning toward the north on the east and west faces of WTC 7 and were approaching the north face. On the west side, fire had been observed on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, while on the east side, actively spreading fires were present on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors, and there were indications that fire had appeared on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor toward the south side of



the east face. Imagery recorded near the end of this period provided no indication of fire or additional broken windows on the north face.

### **Fires below the 14<sup>th</sup> Floor on the North Face, 2:57 p.m. to 3:42 p.m.**

There is a substantial time gap in available imagery between the times when Figure 5–113 and Figure 5–118 were taken and the next available image (Figure 5–119) that provides useful information about the fire distribution. The photograph in Figure 5–119 was shot on film, and it was difficult to determine exactly when it was taken. Fortunately, a series of time-stamped digital photographs shot from high on a building to the north on Greenwich Street around the same time provided a view of sunlight and shadows on the roof of the building at 70 Murray Street. (See Figure 5–2.) This roof was also visible in photographs from the same film roll shot prior to and after the image reproduced in Figure 5–119. Using changes in these light and shadow patterns, it was possible to determine that the photograph was taken around 2:57 p.m. The uncertainty in this time is estimated as  $\pm 5$  min.

The photograph in Figure 5–119 provides a great deal of detail. For instance, it is possible to discern the open windows 8-42A and 8-47B. During the time from roughly 2:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. fires had moved to the north face of WTC 7 on both the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. The fires on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor seemed to be just beginning to grow. There is one area of relatively intense orange flame visible through open window 12-45C, and smaller, more reddish flames are visible in windows 12-44C, 12-44D, and 12-45A.

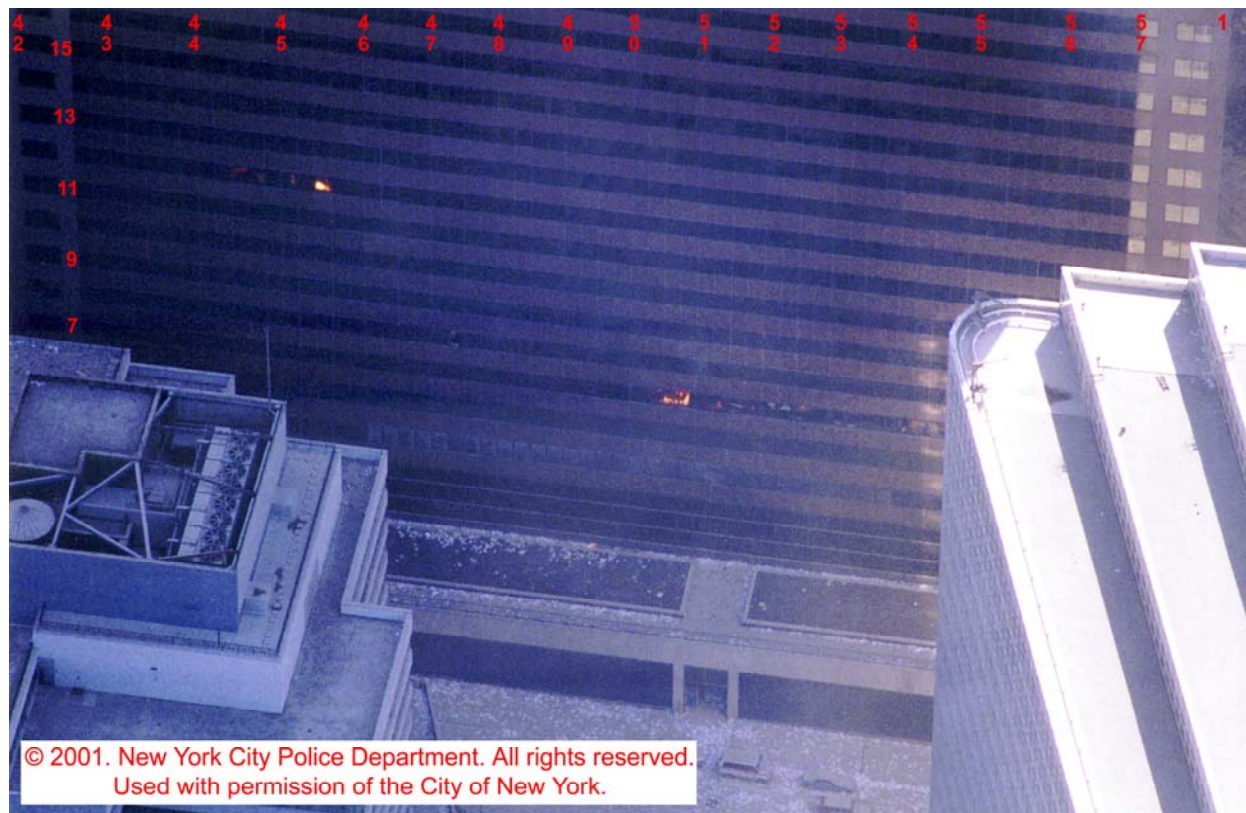
Fire on the north side of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor first appeared at locations well removed from the eastern edge. Fires had been observed earlier spreading along the east side of the building. The floor diagram in Chapter 3 indicates that there were a series of small offices on the north face that opened onto a corridor that ran from the east side to the west side. The fact that the fires appeared in offices located about 1/3 of the way across from the east edge suggests that the fire took an internal pathway, perhaps along this corridor, to reach these offices.

The fires spreading on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor displayed a different behavior than those on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. By the time Figure 5–119 was taken, this fire had spread over at least 18 windows running from windows 7-50B to 7-54C. All of these windows appeared to be open, with the possible exception of window 7-51A, which was adjacent to column 51. Note that windows to the west of 7-54C are hidden from view by the building at 123 Barclay Street, and it is not possible to determine where these fires first reached the north side. Several small spot fires are visible through the open windows. The most intense burning area was at windows 7-50C and 7-50D.

A much closer view of the windows near column 51 on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor is shown in Figure 5–120. This image is taken from a video clip that was recorded shortly after the photograph in Figure 5–119. The fire visible through window 7-50B had grown somewhat. The flames in this area appear to fill the volume. For some of the windows, only a portion of the glass was broken. It is possible to make out some interior details. For instance, a burning desk is visible through windows 7-50C and 7-50D. In the video, a large object was observed falling from the ceiling through windows 7-51B to 7-51D. Even though the flames are locally heavy, little smoke or flame exited through nearby open windows.

The observations indicate that a relatively low intensity fire with sufficient heat release to break nearby windows spread rapidly across the north edge of the building on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. As noted earlier in this chapter, the tenants had been relocated from the western half of the floor, probably reducing the fuel load.

Consistent with this, the apparent low fire intensities suggest that the fuel load or burning rate was insufficient to induce flashover in this large space.



**Figure 5–119. Photograph showing the north face of WTC 7 taken from a helicopter around 2:57 p.m. ± 5 min.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.

Only very light smoke can be seen coming from the open windows on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. Even though the fires were relatively small, they would be expected to release much more smoke than was observed. It is likely that this smoke was being vented elsewhere from the building, perhaps at locations on the east or south faces. This would be the expected behavior if internal flow pathways were available to these faces due to the positive pressure created at the open windows on the north side by the ambient wind flowing over this face and the corresponding low pressure areas created on the leeward faces.

Figure 5–121 shows another aerial view of the north face taken several minutes after Figure 5–119. The time for this photograph was estimated to be 3:05 p.m. ± 5 min in the same way as for Figure 5–119. During the approximately 8 min between the two images, the fire distributions on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors changed noticeably. On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, the nascent fires visible in Figure 5–119 have spread to cover windows 12-43C to 12-45E and have grown dramatically in intensity. The drywall-enclosed columns are easily identified through the open windows because they show up as dark areas where they block the flames from view.



**Figure 5–120. Frame taken from a video clip shot looking down on WTC 7 from a building to the northwest showing the fires along a length of the north side of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of WTC 7.**

The video clip was recorded shortly after the photograph in Figure 5–119 was taken. The intensities have been adjusted and window numbers added.

A closer view of the fires burning on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor around this time is shown in Figure 5–122. The flames appear to fill the space over the several windows that are visible. Some details are evident inside the building. There appears to be a large file cabinet visible against a wall through window 12-45B. Flames are visible behind window 12-45E, but only a small section of glass seems to have broken out.

Reference to the floor plan in Chapter 3 indicates that the fires on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor extended over at least four different offices at this time. The fires appeared to be fully developed, completely filling the open windows, suggesting that they were flashed over. Even so, relatively little smoke and flames were coming from the open windows. This behavior can be contrasted with the large flame extensions observed earlier from open windows on the east face of this floor. As discussed above, these differences are likely due to the ambient wind field.

An aerial view of the north face of WTC 7 taken from a much longer distance than Figure 5–119 and Figure 5–121 is shown in Figure 5–123. The time of this photograph was estimated in the same way as the earlier aerial shots as 3:10 p.m. with a  $\pm 5$  min uncertainty. Flames were only visible on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor from this distance and angle. The fire had spread to the east and west in the roughly 5 min period following the photograph in Figure 5–121. The flames had spread all the way to the east face.



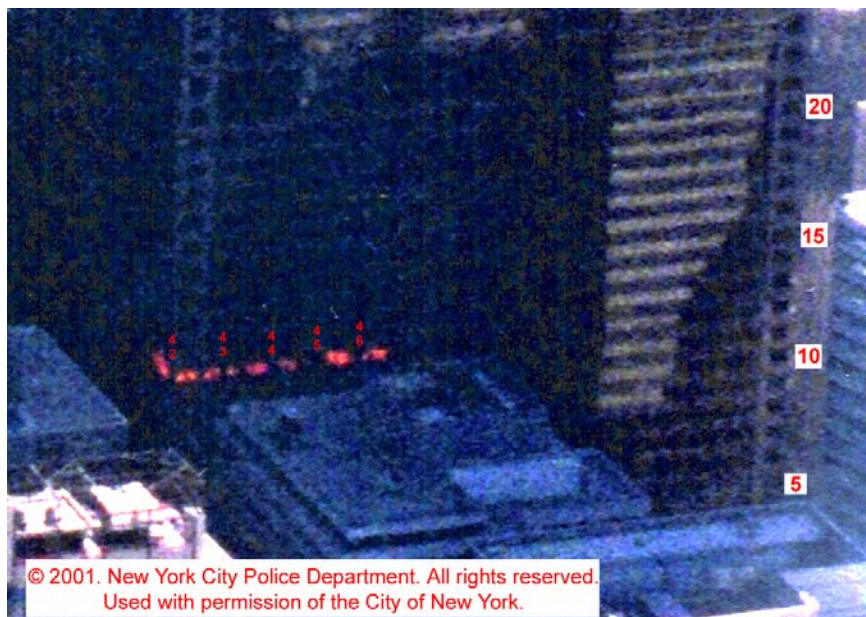
**Figure 5–121. Cropped photograph of the north face of WTC 7, taken from a helicopter around 3:05 p.m. ± 5 min.**

The image was rotated 6° counterclockwise and the intensities were adjusted. Column and floor numbers have been added.



**Figure 5–122. Frame taken from a video clip shot looking down on WTC 7 from a building to the northwest shows the fires along a length of the north side of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of WTC 7.**

The video clip was recorded around the same time as the photograph in Figure 5–121 was taken. The intensities have been modified and window identification added.



**Figure 5–123. Enlarged section of a long distance aerial shot of the north face of WTC 7 taken around 3:10 p.m. ± 5 min.**

The contrast has been enhanced and the intensity levels adjusted. Floor numbers have been added.

Flames were also visible from at least the two windows on the east face adjacent to the northeast corner, indicating that the flames had engulfed the small unburned island in this corner of the floor. On the west side the flames had moved beyond column 46. This was the first substantial apparent fire spread in this direction since fire first appeared on the face shortly before 3:00 p.m. (See Figure 5–119.)

The fires on the north side of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor were extensive, covering a length running approximately from window 12-41A to 12-46C, and intense. Close inspection of Figure 5–123 shows that the fire in the vicinity of windows 12-44C to 12-44E had begun to die down. This area is close to where the fires first appeared just before 3:00 p.m., indicating that, for this location, the period of intense burning lasted for roughly 15 min.

Figure 5–124 provides a view of the north face of WTC 7 taken from the northwest at 3:10:46 p.m. It shows an example of the shadow and sunlight distributions on the roof of the building at 70 Murray Street (the stepped white building at the lower left of the photograph) used for timing the aerial photographs described earlier. Flames are visible on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors of the north face of WTC 7. Light smoke or dust is visible on the north side of the building. Heavy smoke is also visible rising from the east face, indicating that fires were burning near by or that the effluent from more distant fires was being vented through the face.

A much closer view of the fires visible on the north face in Figure 5–124 is provided by the photograph reproduced in Figure 5–125, which was taken within a few minutes of Figure 5–124. The north face is partially obscured by smoke or dust, but it is possible to make out fires in individual windows on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. Columns are visible inside the windows, and these have been identified on the image. On the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, windows are open, and flames are visible from windows 7-47B to 7-49C. In Figure 5–121, which was taken at roughly 3:05 p.m., fires on this floor had reached only as far east as window 7-49A. Longer distance photographs indicate that the extended area of intense fire to the east of column 49 became visible between 3:09:42 p.m. and 3:10:46 p.m. Clearly, fire was continuing to spread toward the east on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor at this time.



**Figure 5–124. Cropped photograph of the north face of WTC 7 taken from a building located to the northwest looking down Greenwich Street at 3:10:46 p.m. ± 3 s. The intensities were adjusted.**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, intense flames are visible in Figure 5–125 as far west as window 12-47C, indicating that this image was taken shortly after the photograph shown in Figure 5–123, in which flames were not yet evident to the west of column 47. The flames completely fill the open windows, suggesting that flashover had taken place within the offices at these locations. As noted earlier, very little smoke or flames are coming from the open windows on this floor, again suggesting that the smoke was venting elsewhere from the building due to the ambient wind direction.

Another close up view of the north face taken from a building to the northwest between 3:11:15 p.m. and 3:16:51 p.m. is shown in Figure 5–126. The fires on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor are visible, but the image did not extend low enough to show the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. During the short period between when the images in Figure 5–125 and Figure 5–126 were taken, the fires on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor broke windows 12-48A to 12-48D, and heavy flames appeared. This indicates that the fires on this floor were continuing to spread toward the west.

A close-up ground shot of the north face of WTC 7 taken from near the corner of Greenwich and Murray Streets is shown in Figure 5–127. Even though the photograph was digital, its timestamp information had been lost by the time the image was provided to the Investigation. The assigned time of 3:12:50 p.m. ± 5 min is based on known times for other photographs from the same camera taken shortly before and afterward. Comparison of Figure 5–127 with Figure 5–126 indicates that Figure 5–127 was taken shortly before Figure 5–126, since windows 12-47D and 12-48A were open in Figure 5–126 and glass was still in place in Figure 5–127. In both figures, windows 12-48B to 12-48D are open, but a larger section of glass was missing from window 12-48D in the later photograph.

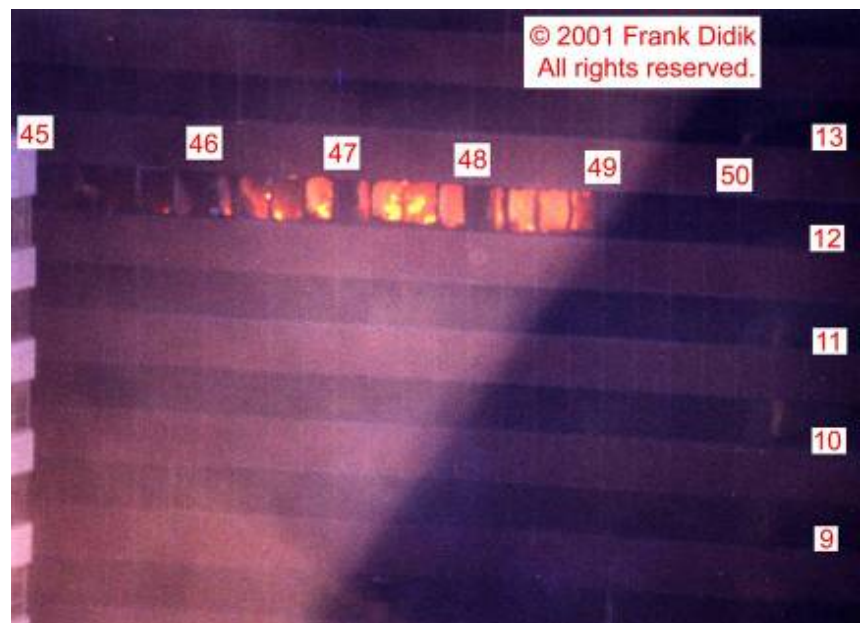


**Figure 5–125.** Cropped close-up photograph of the north face of WTC 7 taken within a few minutes of the image in Figure 5–124.

Fires are visible on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. Column numbers are indicated, and the intensity levels were adjusted.

**Figure 5–126.** Cropped close-up photograph of the north face of WTC 7 taken between 3:11:15 p.m. and 3:16:51 p.m.

Fires are visible on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. Column and floor numbers are indicated, and the intensity levels were adjusted.



In Figure 5–127, the fires observed earlier on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 44 and 46 have died down substantially. Only small flames are visible near windows 12-44B and 12-45E. On the other hand, the flames further to the west are more intense at this time and appear to fill the open windows, indicating that flashover had occurred. As observed earlier, very little smoke and flame are coming from the open windows, likely indicating that the effluent is being vented elsewhere.



**Figure 5–127. Photograph showing the north face of WTC 7, taken around 3:12:50 p.m. with an estimated uncertainty of  $\pm 5$  min from near the corner of Murray and Greenwich Streets.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.



Figure 5–127 provides a good view of the fires on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor around 3:13 p.m. As noted previously, these fires appear to be less intense than those observed on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. There are indications of low intensity flames through windows between columns 50 and 51. Further west, the fire appears to have gone out. The most visible flames extend from windows 7-47B to 7-49B. Window 7-47A appears to be broken, while the glass in windows 7-49C and 7-49D appears to be intact. Comparison with Figure 5–125 indicates that, during the few minutes between the two photographs, the fires on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor had died down somewhat, while not spreading further to the east.

No flames or newly opened windows were present on other floors at this time on the visible portion of the north face. In Figure 5–127 there appears to be light smoke or dust rising from near the ground. There is no evidence to indicate whether this was coming from WTC 7 or from locations outside the building. Several FDNY and NYPD uniformed personnel are visible in Figure 5–127 near Murray Street. Their presence is consistent with the suggestion that the area around WTC 7 had been cordoned off somewhat earlier.

A long distance view of the north face of WTC 7, similar to Figure 5–124, that was shot at 3:22:00 p.m. shows that the fires visible on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors about 10 min earlier had died down somewhat and had not spread noticeably. No fires were visible elsewhere on the face.

An overhead view of the north face looking down Greenwich Street from a building to the northwest is shown in Figure 5–128. It was taken around 3:42:30 p.m.  $\pm$  2 min. Fires are visible on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 47 and 52, with the most intense burning toward the east, on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 50 and 52, and on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 44 and 46, with intense burning visible between columns 44 and 45. The greatest length of fire is on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. An earlier frame from the same video shows fire present on this floor at least one minute earlier. This was the earliest observation of a fire present on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor.

A view of the north face of WTC 7 shot from Greenwich Street is shown in Figure 5–129. Fires are visible on the lower part of WTC 7. This area is enlarged in Figure 5–130. Even though the image is grainy, it provides useful information about the fire distribution at this time. Comparison of the fire distribution with that visible in Figure 5–128 suggests that this photograph was taken just prior to the time when the video frame was recorded. The time of this photograph is estimated to be 3:41:00 p.m., with an uncertainty of 3 min. Flames cover at least a length from windows 8-47C to 8-53D, even though it appears that the glass in these windows had not yet broken. There could be fires further to the west, but these windows are hidden by the building in the foreground. The large extent of the fire suggests that flames must have appeared in this area earlier since some time would be required for the fire to spread, but no indication of fire on this floor was apparent in a photograph taken from the northwest at 3:22:00 p.m., suggesting that fire spread rapidly on this floor. Where visible, the flames on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor appear to fill the windows, providing an indication that the fires in the area were flashed over. As observed previously on the north face, relatively little smoke and flames were coming from open windows, suggesting that the fires were likely vented on the south and/or east faces.

Flames are also visible through open windows on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. At around 3:14 p.m., fires on this floor were observed as far west as window 12-48D, and the distribution was little changed roughly 5 min later. In Figure 5–130, fire had spread at least as far west as window 12-53C during the roughly 20 min between close up images. At the later time, flames are only visible as far east as window 12-48D, indicating that the fires visible earlier had mostly died down. The flames visible on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor around

3:41 p.m. seem to fill the open windows, suggesting flashover conditions, but several windows still appear to have glass in place. This may be an indication that the fire on the north face is not spreading systematically to the west, but at times jumped over adjacent offices which then ignited somewhat later.

Close inspection shows that a dull red glow is visible in windows 13-45C to 13-45E on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. These windows can just be seen at the side of the building at 30 West Broadway, which hides windows further to the east. This image provides the earliest visual evidence that fires on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, which were identified much earlier on the east face, had spread to the north side of WTC 7. Based on Figure 5-128, it is likely that fire was present to the east between columns 44 and 45 at this time.



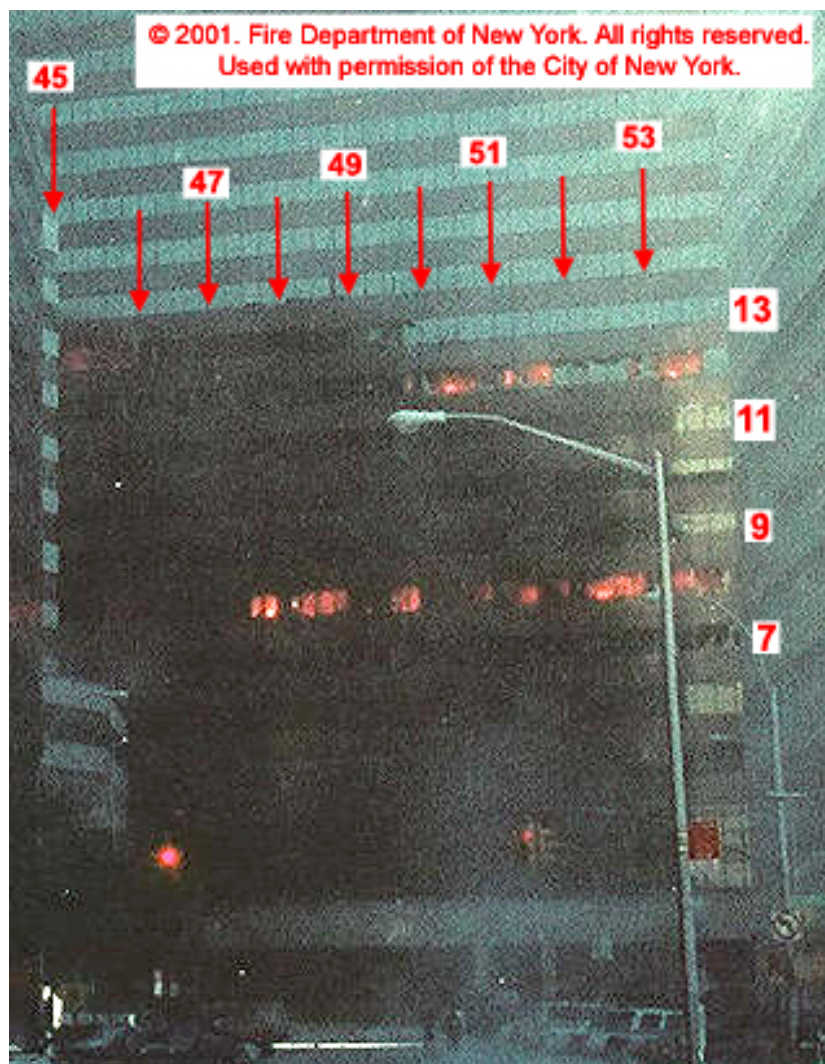
**Figure 5-128.** This frame from a video shot from a building to the northwest of WTC 7 was taken around 3:42:30 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 2$  min.

The intensities have been adjusted and column and floor numbers added.

**Figure 5-129.** Photograph showing the north face of WTC 7 shot looking down Greenwich Street from near the corner of Greenwich and Warren Streets at around 3:41 p.m.

The estimated time uncertainty is  $\pm 3$  min.





**Figure 5–130. View of the north face of WTC 7 taken around 3:41 p.m. ± 3 min, enlarged from Figure 5–129. The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.**

While difficult to discern in Figure 5–130, a number of windows are open on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. Most, if not all, of the windows between window 7-47A and 7-53D are open. There is no indication of fire on the floor in this photograph. Apparently, fire present in this area around 3:13 p.m. had stopped spreading and had died down by 3:41 p.m.

There are no indications of fires on other floors in this time interval, between 2:57 p.m. and 3:42 p.m. With the exception of Figure 5–123, which indicates that fire was present on the north edge of the east face around 3:10 p.m., there are no images available during this time period that show the fire distributions on the east, west, or south face of WTC 7.

#### **Fires below the 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, 3:47 p.m. to 4:40 p.m.**

Figure 5–131 shows a view of the central region of the north face taken from the video shot from a building to the northwest of the site looking down Greenwich Street at a time estimated as 3:50:13 p.m. with an uncertainty of ± 3 min. During the approximate 7 min 45 s period between the time when Figure 5–128 and Figure 5–131 were taken, the fire on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor had spread towards the east and was burning vigorously between columns 46 and 47 at the later time. Windows on this floor around column

50 also appear to have opened. On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor additional windows around column 51 have opened, and fire has appeared in window 12-52A. On the 13<sup>th</sup> floor the fire between columns 44 and 45 has become less intense at the same time that the fire to the west of column 45 appears more intense.

Around the time when the photograph in Figure 5–130 was taken, a news crew managed to reach Barclay Street by way of the building at 123 Barclay Street and filmed the fires in WTC 7 from several vantage points. This video was not time stamped, so it proved difficult to obtain accurate times for the entire clip. However, as discussed below, by comparison with other images taken at relatively well known times, it was possible to estimate times for this video.

Even though 123 Barclay Street was a full block north of the south face of WTC 7 and was nearly completely shielded from the WTC site by WTC 7 and the Verizon Building (see Figure 5–2), all of the windows in the main lobby facing Barclay Street were broken, and the lobby was covered by a thick layer of dust. This observation provides another example of the potential of the dust clouds created by the collapses of the towers to break windows and distribute material. There was no indication that fires ignited in the lobby. Initial views of WTC 7 shot by this news crew were taken through the broken windows in the lobby. Figure 5–132 shows a view of the northwest corner of WTC 7 taken from a video clip shot through the open windows. The time assigned for this video clip is estimated relative to that for Figure 5–134 provided below. Figure 5–132 reveals a great deal about the recent fire behavior. Consider the west face. Flames are visible coming from window 8-6 on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, and heavy smoke is flowing from multiple windows starting at the northwest corner and extending at least as far south as window 8-8. Several video clips were shot from near the same location as Figure 5–132. A frame from one of the clips recorded slightly earlier showing a much closer view of the west face is reproduced in Figure 5–133. In this image, flames are visible in windows 8-3 to 8-5, with heavy flames coming from window 8-3. In a longer distance view from the same clip, flames can also be seen coming from windows 8-1A, 8-1B, and 8-2.

Taken together, these video clips indicate that an intense fire spanning at least half the west side of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor was burning at this time. Conversely, even though there was heavy blackening of the façade above open windows 7-1A, 7-1B, 7-3, and 7-4 visible in the clips, indicating the earlier presence of a fire, no



**Figure 5–131.** This frame from a video shot from a building to the northwest of WTC 7 was taken around 3:50:13 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 3$  min. The intensities have been adjusted and column and floor numbers added.



**Figure 5–132. View of the northwest corner of WTC 7 from a video recorded from inside the lobby of 123 Barclay Street around 3:42 p.m. ± 5 min.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.



**Figure 5–133. View of the west face of WTC 7 taken from a video recorded from inside the lobby of 123 Barclay Street around 3:41:30 ± 5 min.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and column locations are indicated.

fire was visible, and no smoke was coming from these windows at this time. Recall that window 7-5 was already open by the time Figure 5–112 was taken between 2:15 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. A part of the blackened façade above these windows can be seen in Figure 5–133, where it is also apparent that the louver in window 7-2 is still in place. Apparently, the smoke flow from the louvered window was less than from the nearby open windows, since the façade is less darkened immediately above.

The presence of an earlier fire on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor that released substantial smoke near the northwest corner is consistent with the smoke seen in the area in Figure 5–113 (see associated discussion), which was estimated to have been taken between 2:15 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. The observation of heavy burning on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor much later supports the conclusion that the earlier smoke was coming from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. The fact that heavy smoke flowed from windows 7-1A to 7-4 suggests that when this area burned, there was no direct pathway to openings on the south or west walls, since the fire would have vented there, as observed elsewhere. This hypothesis is not supported by the floor diagram shown in Chapter 3, which indicates that windows 7-1A to 7-4 were open to the same common area as windows further south. The same conclusion concerning pathways to the south or east face applies for the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, since heavy smoke and flames were coming from the open windows on the west face.

On the north face, every window on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors to the west of column 51, with the exception of window 8-56A, was open at the time Figure 5–132 was taken. This is the first visual evidence that fires had burned on these floors between column 54 and the west edge of the face. The only locations where flames can be seen are near column 51 on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Other clips shot around the same time show fire in windows 8-57B and 8-57C. In Figure 5–130, intense burning was present between columns 51 and 54. The fact that these fires had died down by the time of the later video clip indicates that many minutes separate the images in Figure 5–130 and Figure 5–132. This is consistent with the assigned times.

The open windows and fire distributions on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors provide clues concerning fire movement.

- On the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, the evidence indicates that an earlier fire spread up the western edge of the building. Later fires were observed near the center of the north face moving toward the east. The fact that fires had burned earlier on the west side suggests that the fire moving along the west side of the building turned at the northwest corner and began to spread toward the east.
- A different movement is implied by the observations on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. A rapidly developing intense fire was first observed near the center of the north face. By the time the western side of the north face was observed, fires in this area had already died down, but intense burning was present on the west face near the northwest corner, with flames also observed just to the east on the north face, suggesting that the initial fires that grew on the north side of the floor had originally bypassed the northwest corner of the floor, only spreading into this area many minutes later. Either that the area between windows 8-1A and 8-6 was protected by interior walls, or the fire initially reached the north face by an interior pathway that did not pass along the western edge of the floor. The observation of heavy smoke and fire coming from these windows implies there was no interior flow path to the south and east faces, and could be an indication that interior walls were indeed present.

Even though the open windows on the north sides of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors visible in Figure 5–132 were clearly subjected to high temperatures, little blackening of the building façade above the windows is evident. The only substantial blackening was near column 51 on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. As observed at other

locations on the north face, the fires burning in this area apparently vented on other faces as a result of the pressure distribution created by the ambient wind, in these cases most likely from the south face. Recall that large areas of the south face on these floors were opened during the collapse of WTC 1. Interior pathways from the north side of WTC 7 to the south must have been available on these floors.

Multiple open windows can be seen on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor in Figure 5–132, reaching as far west as window 12-53C. The window glass between columns 52 and 53 is mostly intact. The only area where substantial flames are visible is near column 50. Comparison with Figure 5–130 shows that the fires on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor had not spread further west during the short period between the images, but that the fires between columns 51 and 54 had died down considerably. There is no indication of blackening on the façade above the open windows, indicating that the nearby fires had vented elsewhere.

Closer inspection of Figure 5–132 reveals that while the glass in window 12-55C was still in place, it had apparently cracked. This is an early indication that fire was nearby. Another video clip taken from the same location a short while later shows that windows 12-55B and 12-55C had opened and flames filled both windows. After a brief lull, the fires burning on the north side of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor continued their spread to the west. As noted earlier, the fires on this floor seemed to occasionally skip some closed windows and appear further west. This suggests that instead of spreading continuously along the north edge, the fires were penetrating a series of offices and then growing to the point where windows were broken. Each of these office fires was apparently somewhat independent, which is consistent with the floor plan shown in Chapter 3.

There are no indications of fire activity below the 7<sup>th</sup> floor at the time of Figure 5–132. On the west side of the north face open windows are only present on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. It is not possible to see windows above the 8<sup>th</sup> floor on the west face due to the heavy smoke.

An oblique view looking along the north face of WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–134. It is a frame taken from another video clip shot from inside the lobby of 123 Barclay Street. The image is estimated to have been recorded roughly two minutes later than the frame shown in Figure 5–132, based on clip lengths, open windows, and fire distributions. Using the appearance of the face, the identifiable windows, and the locations of columns visible behind open windows it was possible to assign the indicated column locations. Careful comparison of fire locations and open window locations seen in this image with those in Figure 5–128, Figure 5–130, and Figure 5–131 shows that this video frame was taken very shortly after the frame shown in Figure 5–128. A time of 3:44 p.m. with an uncertainty of 4 min has been assigned.

Figure 5–132 and Figure 5–134 together show that every window on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor between column 47 and the western edge of the north face was broken out at this time. No flames are visible on this floor in either image. As shown by Figure 5–127, fire had spread as far east as window 7-47A as early as 3:13 p.m. No further eastward fire spread was observed over the following 45 min, and the fires appear to have died down.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, heavy flames are visible between columns 47 and 51 in Figure 5–134. Comparison with Figure 5–130, which was taken somewhere between 2 min to 10 min earlier, indicates that the flaming area had not moved further east during the intervening time, but that substantial fires, present earlier between columns 51 and 54, had died down. Several windows that earlier had glass in place between columns 49 and 51 were open at the later time. Even though no fire is evident to the east of column 47 in Figure 5–134, there are indications that window glass in several windows to the east of this point had

begun to break. Despite the heavy fire on this floor, only light white smoke was coming from the open windows.



**Figure 5–134. View of the north face of WTC 7 taken from a video recorded from inside the lobby of 123 Barclay Street at 3:44 p.m. ± 4 min.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and floor and column numbers have been added.

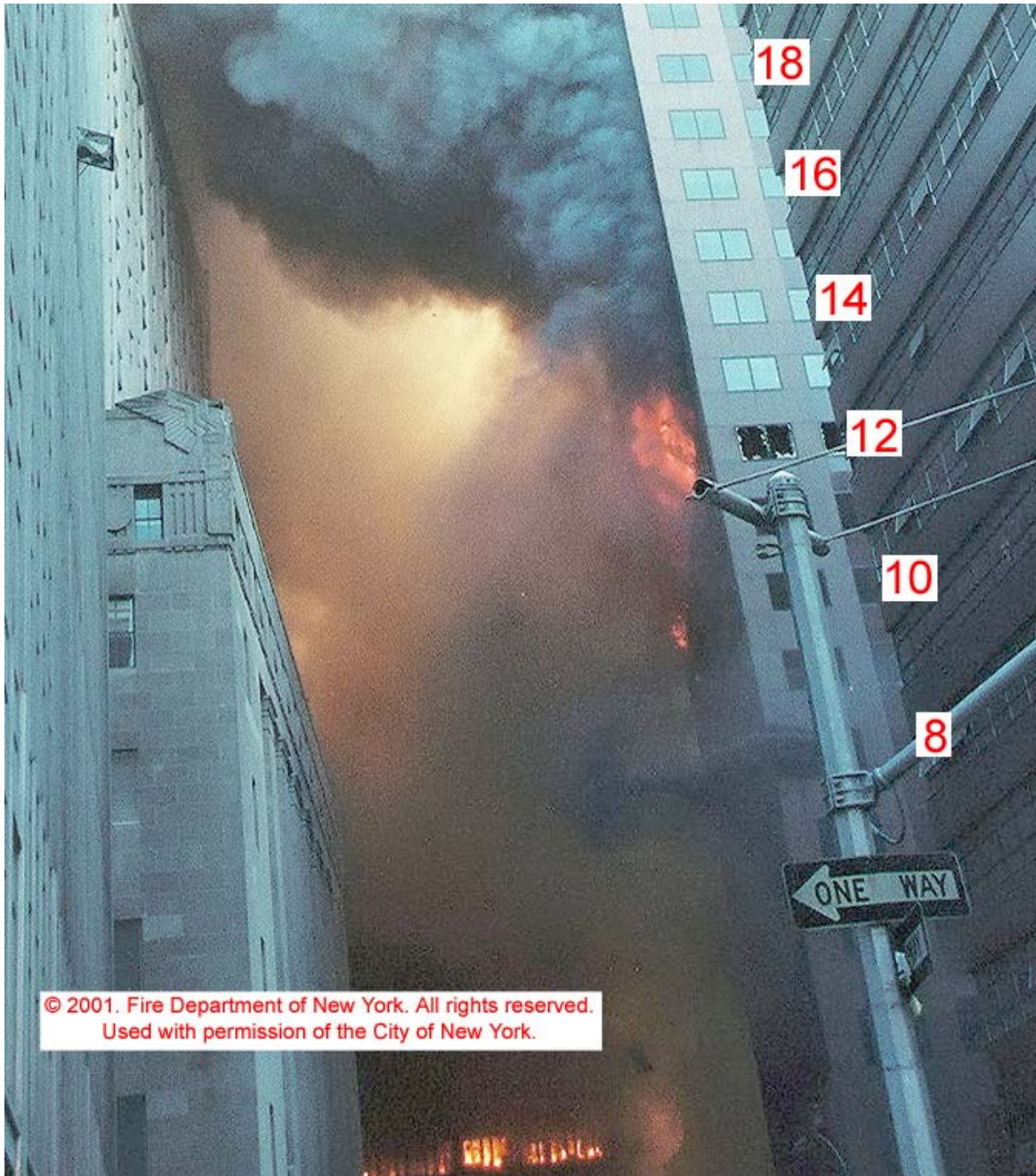
On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, the flames that had recently appeared in windows 12-55B and 12-55C stand out. Further east, heavy flames are visible near column 51. Flames were also visible at the same location in Figure 5–132. All of the windows to the east of column 51 appear to be open, but there are no indications of active fire. Despite the heavy fire, essentially no smoke or flames were coming from open windows on this floor.

In Figure 5–130, low level flames were visible on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor immediately to the west of column 45. In Figure 5–134, it is clear that windows between the east edge and column 46 were open at the later time, and there are indications that glass was beginning to break in windows further to the west. It is not possible to observe flaming in these windows at this severe angle.

It is difficult to identify how fire moved onto the north side of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor from Figure 5–130 and Figure 5–134. A photograph (Figure 5–135) taken at an unknown earlier time, estimated as between 3:20 p.m. and 3:40 p.m., provides an important clue. This image, shot from near the corner of West Broadway and Park Place, shows an oblique view of the east face. Intense flames appear to be coming from windows 13-39 to 13-41 on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. A much smaller flame can be seen in window 13-41A. Despite the steep viewing angle, there seems to be a line of flames extending across most of the east face on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. Heavy smoke is rising from these fires. There also appears to be lighter smoke lower down on the east face, but it is not possible to identify its source.

Windows at the east edge of the north face are also visible in Figure 5–135. Windows 13-42A to 13-42C still have glass in place on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, which means that this image was taken prior to Figure 5–134. The heavy smoke pouring from open window 8-42A on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor indicates that a significant fire was burning on this floor at this time, even though it is clear from Figure 5–134 that nearby windows still have intact glass. Windows 12-42A to 12-42C are open on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor with no sign of flames nearby, indicating that this photograph was taken well after the aerial view in Figure 5–123, which was taken around 3:10 p.m. and shows heavy flames in these corner windows.





**Figure 5–135. Cropped photograph showing the east edge of the north face and an oblique view of the east face of WTC 7, taken from near the corner of West Broadway and Park Place.**

It was likely taken between 3:20 p.m. and 3:40 p.m. The buildings burning in the background are WTC 5 (left) and WTC 6 (right), and the U.S. Post Office is on the left. Floor numbers have been added and intensity levels have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–136. Frame taken from a video shot from near the corner of Greenwich Street and Park Place showing the north face of WTC 7 between 3:49 p.m. and 3:54 p.m.**  
The building on the left is 30 West Broadway. The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.

The fire behaviors discussed above suggest that, unlike the fires on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, the fires on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor spread northward up the east side of WTC 7 before turning the northeast corner and moving west across the north face.

After leaving the lobby of 123 Barclay Street, the news crew moved out onto Greenwich Street, where they filmed the north face of WTC 7 from near the corner of Greenwich Street and Park Place. As before, the exact arrival time is unknown, but an assumed 5 min travel time yields an estimate somewhere between 3:44 p.m. and 3:54 p.m. Figure 5–136 shows a frame extracted from this video clip that provides a good head-on view of much of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> floors. All of the open windows visible on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor are dark, providing additional confirmation that the fire that had spread as far as window 7-47A died down before covering the entire north face. A couple of the windows near column 44 appear to have broken glass, but there are no indications of fire in this area.

The appearance of the windows on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor changed substantially between the times when the video frames shown in Figure 5–134 and Figure 5–136 were taken. At the earlier time, fire was visible as far east as window 8-47A, while in Figure 5–136, fire is not only apparent at the adjacent windows between columns 46 and 47, but intense flames have appeared much further to the east in windows 43E to 44E. It is possible that the fire is even further to east, but these windows are hidden by the building in the

foreground. Closer inspection shows that the glass in window 8-45B has also broken, and a telltale orange glow reveals that flames are also growing nearby. The west edge of the fire area is in roughly the same location as earlier.

A closer view of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors, taken from a video clip recorded shortly after the one from which Figure 5–136 was taken, is shown in Figure 5–137. The frame includes the location on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor where fire spread had stopped. There appears to be a wall visible through windows 7-47A and 7-47B that terminates at column 47. If this wall extended far enough inward, it might have stopped the fire as it spread eastward across the north face. The glow through the open windows on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor reveals the presence of a substantial fire within this area. However, the only actual flames that could be seen were in window 8-48D. Either the flames responsible for the glow were hidden below the window sill or were located further inside the building. It does not appear that the upper portion of the interior space near the windows was filled with flame. It is thus not possible to identify whether this fire was flashed over.



**Figure 5–137. Close up of the 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> floors of the north face of WTC 7 from a video shot between 3:49:30 p.m. and 3:54:30 p.m. near the corner of Greenwich Street and Park Place.**

The image intensities have been adjusted, and column locations are indicated.

Figure 5–137 provides a good indication of how window glass breakage occurred in this area of the north face. It seems that the glass would first break near the center, leaving a band of glass in the window frame. Later, the remainder of the glass would fall out, leaving a fully open window frame. The column enclosures were located about 6 in. behind the window glass. Even so, they provided some protection for the glass since jagged-edged pieces with widths roughly the same as the enclosed columns often remained in the window frames. A much closer view of this type of breakage is shown in Figure 5–138 for the glass around column 48 on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. This type of glass breakage near columns was widespread, as is evident in Figure 5–136.

Some light smoke is visible coming from open windows on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor in Figure 5–137, but it is not as dense as would be expected for the amount of fire present. Light blackening of the façade above windows on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors suggests that only light smoke had come from the area earlier. Support for the hypothesis that smoke was being vented elsewhere comes from Figure 5–138. Smoke is visible rising upward in windows 8-47B and 8-47D, while flames are visible in 8-47B. Even though this internal smoke is easily seen, the only smoke flowing from the nearby open windows is coming from small flames

burning on the window frames. In the video clip, it is clear that the internal smoke is flowing away from the open windows. This is the strongest evidence identified that the effluent created by fires burning near the north face of WTC 7 often vented elsewhere from the building, most likely due to pressure differences created by the ambient wind.



**Figure 5–138. Frame taken from a video shot from near the corner of Greenwich Street and Park Place showing windows 8-47B to 8-48A between 3:49 p.m. and 3:54 p.m. The intensities have been adjusted.**

Additional details concerning the local effects of the fires can be seen in Figure 5–138. For instance, the distorted frame that had held the drop ceiling for the area is still in place above the windows. The ceiling tiles have been dislodged. Further inside, it is possible to see the floor slab for the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. There appears to be a wall partition visible through window 8-47C. It seems to terminate at the drop ceiling. For this reason, it would have been unlikely to have been an effective fire barrier.

Figure 5–136 also provides good views of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> floors. On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, every window glass pane between the east edge and window 12-52C is broken. It is easy to identify the column locations due to the intact glass in place in front of the columns. Flames are visible through the open windows from window 12-49D to window 12-52 D. Comparison with Figure 5–134 shows that the fire between columns 52 and 53 had grown substantially. Additional glass has broken in windows 12-51D to 12-52B, and the flames are much brighter. Window 12-52C still has glass in place. Even though fire had spread earlier to a location between columns 55 and 56, there is no indication of a fire in windows 12-53D to 12-54C.

Figure 5–136 provides a better view of conditions on the east side of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor than is available in Figure 5–134. All of the window panes between the east edge and column 46 have been broken. Several windows between columns 46 and 48 are also open. Comparison with Figure 5–134 shows that much of the breakage between columns 46 and 48 occurred during the approximately 5 min period between the two frames. An active area of fire is visible extending from window 13-43A to 13-45B. The fires to the immediate west seem to have already died down, as have those between columns 42 and 43 at the east edge. The observations suggest that the fires on the north face of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor are burning similarly to

those on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, i.e., by spreading somewhat erratically through the rooms located along the face. (See Chapter 3.)

Figure 5–139 shows another view of the WTC 7 north face looking down Greenwich Street from a building to the northwest of WTC 7. The time for this video frame is estimated as 3:54:14 p.m. with an uncertainty of 3.5 min. Comparison with Figure 5–131 indicates that the fire on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor has moved to the east in the roughly 4 minutes between the two video frames, with an intense fire now visible in windows 8-45a to 8-45e. Note that the time assignment for Figure 5–139 is consistent with the times assigned for Figure 5–136 to Figure 5–138 since window glass was still in place in these windows when those video clips were recorded.



**Figure 5–139.** This frame from a video shot from a building to the northwest of WTC 7 was taken around 3:54:14 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 3.5$  min. The intensities have been adjusted and column and floor numbers added.

The intensity of the fires on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 48 and 50 decreased markedly during the same period. Similar decreases in fire intensity are evident on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 51 and 52 and on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 44 and 46.

After filming from near the corner of Greenwich Street and Park Place, the news crew moved down Greenwich Street to its corner with Barclay Street, immediately across the street from WTC 7. Figure 5–140 shows a frame from a video clip looking up at the north face shot from this location. The estimated time of between 3:51 p.m. and 3:58 p.m. was obtained by adding three minutes to the estimated time for the clip shown in Figure 5–136. This allows for some time spent near Park Place as well as the time required to move a block south to Barclay Street.

The appearances of the open windows and fires on the face are similar in Figure 5–136 and Figure 5–140, with one major exception. In the later frame, extremely heavy flames and dense smoke are coming from windows 8-44B to 8-44E. This is the first observation of large amounts of effluent flowing from fires on the north side of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and suggests that an internal flow pathway to the east or south faces from these windows was available. This intense fire had grown rapidly, since in the earlier clip only relatively small fires were evident through windows 8-44B and 8-44D, and the glass for window 8-44E, along with window 8-45A, was still in place. Unfortunately, the view of windows 8-45A to 8-45E is blocked by a

street sign. Determining whether or not these windows were open at this time would have allowed the time uncertainty for this clip to be reduced somewhat.



**Figure 5–140. Frame taken from a video shot from near the corner of Greenwich and Barclay Streets showing the north face of WTC 7 between 3:51 p.m. and 3:58 p.m.**  
The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.

After leaving the corner of Greenwich and Barclay Street, the film crew next moved to the corner of West Broadway and Barclay Street. It is estimated that it would have taken a minimum of 3 min to reach this location after filming on the corner of Greenwich and Barclay Streets. This assumption leads to an estimated time between 3:53 p.m. and 4:02 p.m. Figure 5–141 shows a frame from a video clip recorded shortly after reaching the location.

During the estimated 5 min between the times when the clips shown in Figure 5–140 and Figure 5–141 were taken, the heavy smoke and fire observed coming out of windows between columns 44 and 45 on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor in Figure 5–140 had retreated back into the building. The dark bands deposited on the façade above these windows are telltales for the earlier heavy effluent flowing from the nearby fires. Similar darkening is present above windows 8-43C and 8-45B, indicating that earlier heavy smoke flows also took place from these windows. Interestingly, the glass in windows 8-45E and 8-46A appears to be at least partially intact. The fire distribution apparent in Figure 5–139 suggests that these windows are fully open, which may be an indication that the video frame in Figure 5–141 was recorded slightly earlier than the frame shown in Figure 5–139. This conclusion is consistent with time uncertainties assigned for these two frames.



**Figure 5–141. Frame from a video shot from near the corner of West Broadway and Barclay Street showing the eastern side of the north face of WTC 7 between 3:53 p.m. and 4:02 p.m.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.

The fire spreading to the east on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor had apparently reached the east face by the time Figure 5–141 was recorded. Multiple window panes are broken, heavy fire is visible between columns 43 and 44, and window 8-42D is open at the top with flames visible through the remaining glass. A small flame has also appeared on the east face, indicating windows were beginning to break on this side of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Within a few seconds this small flame grew much more intense.

Flames are also visible on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor in Figure 5–141. Review of the video clips indicated that flames were periodically observed from window 13-42C to window 13-45C. Only light smoke is coming from the open windows on the north side of this floor. As observed earlier, there is no indication of fires burning on the east side of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor at this time. Elsewhere, window glass on the east side of the north face on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> floors, and above the 13<sup>th</sup> floor is intact.

Another frame from a video clip recorded roughly 2 min later showing the lower northeast corner of WTC 7 is reproduced in Figure 5–142. The changes on the north side of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor were substantial over this short period. Additional windows have opened near the eastern edge, and the fires have grown substantially in intensity. While not readily apparent in Figure 5–142, flames were visible in window 8-42A during the short video clip.



**Figure 5–142. Frame taken from a video shot near the corner of West Broadway and Barclay Street showing the lower northeast corner of WTC 7 between 3:55 p.m. and 4:04 p.m.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.

Some of the more interesting observations from Figure 5–142 are on the east face. Very intense flames were coming from multiple windows on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor at this time. A close-up of these flames, taken from a video clip recorded about a minute later is shown in Figure 5–143. Note that additional glass has broken out of window 8-42C during the short period between the two frames. Comparison of the flames near the northeast corner on the north and east faces provides a vivid demonstration of the different burning behaviors on these two faces. On the north face, the flames are mostly inside the windows, which was generally true for fires observed on this face, while very intense external burning, similar to that observed on the east side of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor much earlier, is taking place on the east face. These observations provide additional evidence that pressure differences generated by the ambient wind affected the local fire behaviors observed on different faces.

Closer inspection of Figure 5–142 reveals what appears to be a relatively light plume of white smoke rising from near the top of the louvers that spanned the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors on the east face. It was not possible to identify the exact location of the plume relative to the edge of the building. At a minimum, the presence of this plume suggests that smoke had been transported to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> floors before being vented. It is also possible that the source of the smoke was a fire burning somewhere on these two floors. The available imagery does not provide evidence indicating which of these two alternatives is correct.

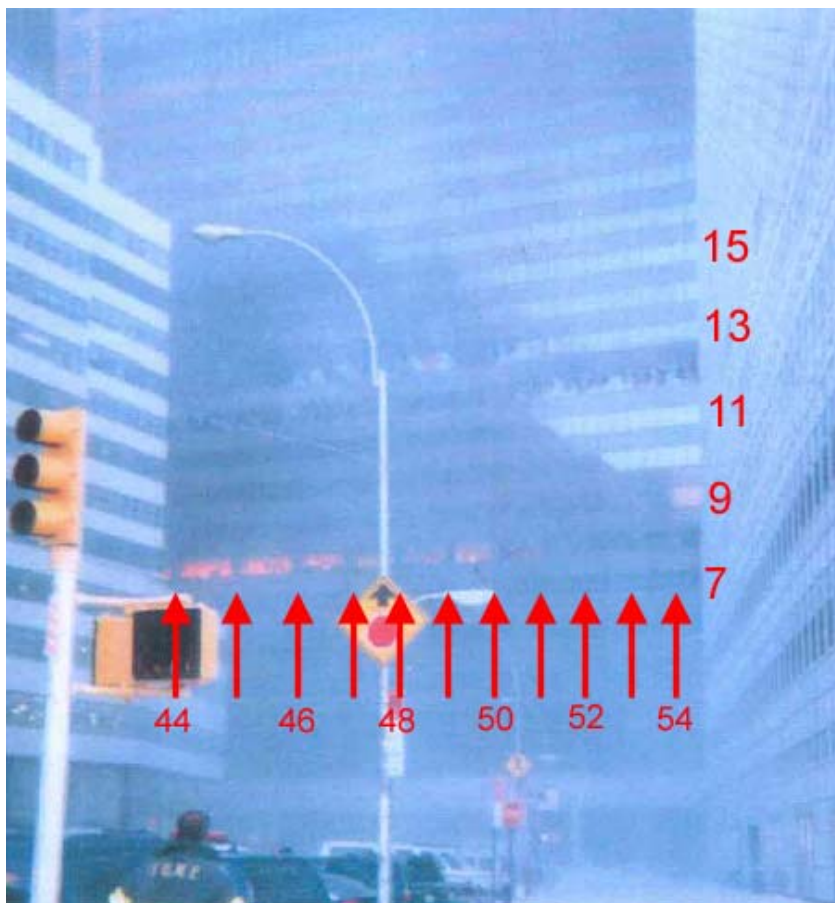




**Figure 5-143. Frame from a video shot near the corner of West Broadway and Barclay Street showing a close up of the northeast corner of WTC 7 at the 8<sup>th</sup> floor between 3:56 p.m. and 4:05 p.m.**

The intensities have been adjusted.

Figure 5-144 shows another view of the north face of WTC 7 taken looking down Greenwich Street from a location near its corner with Murray Street. The time of this photograph could not be determined, but comparison of the fire distributions with Figure 5-139 indicates that it was likely taken around 3:55 pm.



**Figure 5-144. Cropped photograph showing the north face of WTC 7, shot from near the corner of Murray and Greenwich Streets near 3:55 p.m.**

Column and floor numbers have been added.

Source: Unknown

In the ground shot, flames are visible on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor from window 8-43D to column 51. The fire between columns 50 and 51 is clearly dying down, while flames are no longer evident to the west of column 51.

There appear to be flames present in windows 9-54A and 9-54B. There is some ambiguity because the glass in these windows still appears to be intact. It is possible that a reflection is responsible for the reddish color. If there is indeed fire at this location, it represents the earliest indication of fire on this floor.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, windows 12-53D, 12-54A, and 12-54B were opened between the times when Figure 5-136 and Figure 5-144 were taken. Recall that at the earlier time, flames had been observed further to the west. Apparently, the burning was filling in offices that the fire had previously bypassed. Only light burning is apparent in the immediate vicinity. On the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, windows appear to be open as far west as column 50 in Figure 5-144, with flames visible to the west of column 48. In Figure 5-136, the open windows only extended as far west as column 48. Clearly, the fire on this floor was continuing to spread to the west.

A frame from a video clip taken from a location much further up Greenwich Street than the view in Figure 5-144 is reproduced in Figure 5-145. The fire distribution indicates the clip was taken later than the photograph in Figure 5-144. Relatively low intensity flames are visible on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor from window 8-45E to window 8-49B. In Figure 5-144, the flames were in general more intense and extended to window 8-50D. Since fully developed fires typically burn intensely for about 20 min, it is likely that the time between the two images was less than 20 min. Assuming a 15 min difference yields an estimated time of 4:10 p.m. with at least a 5 min uncertainty.

The most dramatic change in the fire distributions between the two images is on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. In the earlier image, there was evidence of a fire growing in windows 9-54A and 9-54B. In the later image, flames and heavy smoke are visible between windows 9-51A and 9-53B. In the video clip and others recorded around the same time, it can be seen that significant external burning was taking place. Such burning was not typical of most locations on the north face. This observation not only suggests that the fire had flashed over at this location, but also that there was no internal path available within WTC 7 for the fire effluent to vent on the east or south face. In Figure 5-145, isolated flames have reached as far east as windows 9-49B and 9-49C, indicating that the fire was spreading from west to east.

Small isolated flames are evident at several locations on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor in Figure 5-145. This is somewhat surprising since the fires on this floor had stopped spreading and died down much earlier. There is still no indications that a fire has spread to the east beyond column 47. No fires or broken windows are apparent on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> floors.

The north face of WTC 7 can be seen in the photograph reproduced in Figure 5-146. The time for this image could not be accurately determined, but it was clearly taken after the photograph shown in Figure 5-145. Even though the photograph was taken from a long distance, it provides useful information about the fire distributions. The most intense fires are on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. Flames can be seen on this floor at both ends of the visible length running from window 9-45C to 9-52D. Continuous flames are present between columns 45 and 50. Apparently, the fire observed between columns 49 and 50 in Figure 5-145 grew and spread rapidly to the east. Interestingly, there is still no sign of fire between columns 50 and 51. This may be an indication that there was a room in that location that had not yet been breached by the fire. As seen earlier, heavy smoke is rising from the fire on this floor.



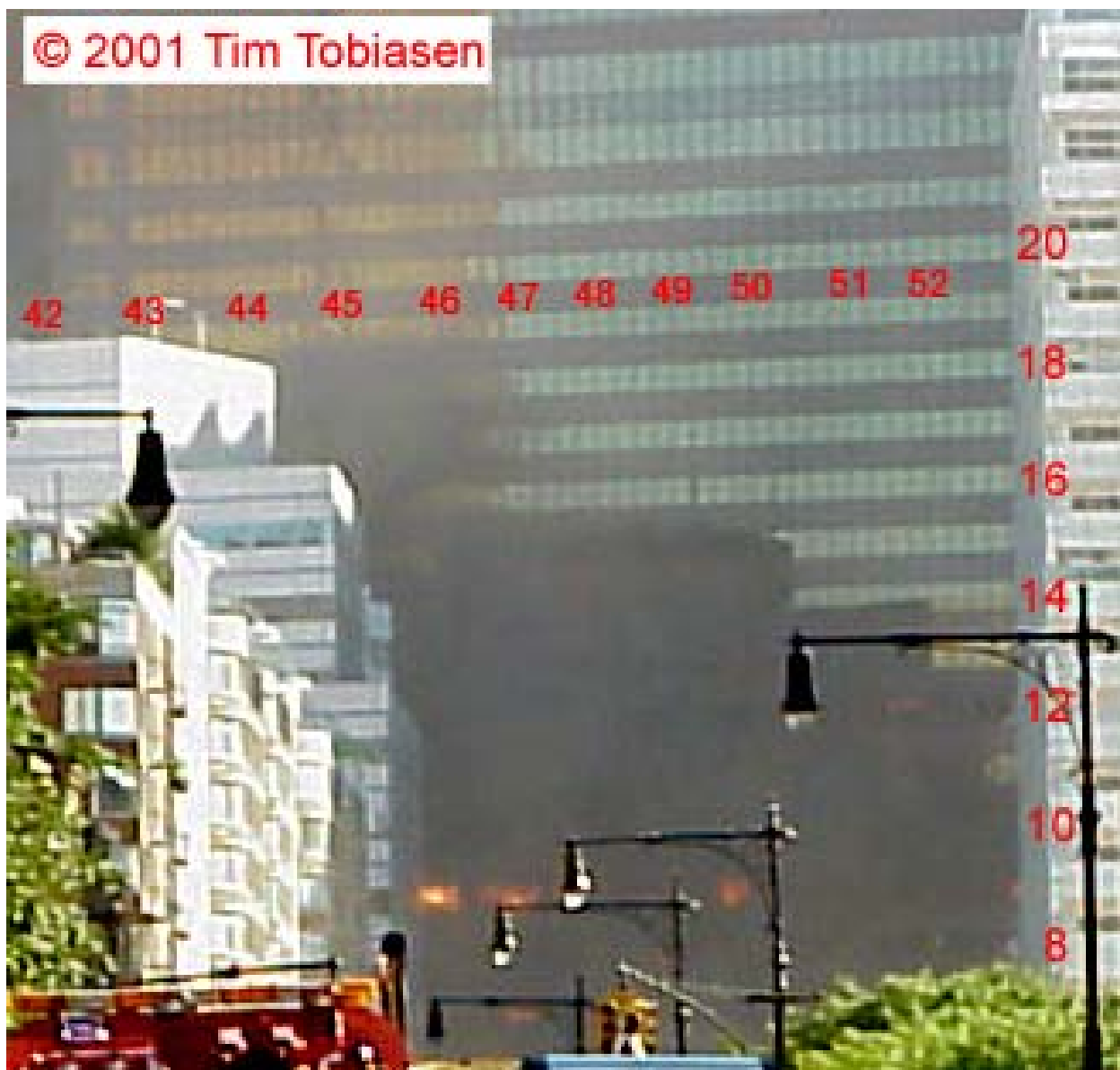
**Figure 5–145. Frame taken from a video clip shot from near the corner of Greenwich and Jay Streets around 4:10 p.m. ± 5 min.**

The intensities have been adjusted, a face was blurred, and column and floor numbers have been added.

Low intensity flames continue to burn on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 47 and 49. Similar flames are also visible on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 51 and 52. In Figure 5–145 it appeared that some of the glass was still in place for some of these windows. This seems to be no longer the case in Figure 5–146.

The amount of fire spread and growth between the times when the images in Figure 5–145 and Figure 5–146 were taken would be expected to require many minutes. Assuming a period of 10 min yields a crude estimate of 4:15 p.m.

Close inspection of Figure 5–146 reveals that there is an area of flame on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 46 and 47. After a long period of inactivity, fire has clearly made its way to the other side of the obstacle that had earlier halted its spread across the face. Note that there is no indication of how fire arrived at this location. It could have spread from the west, south, or east.



**Figure 5–146. Cropped photograph showing the north face of WTC 7 from near the corner of Greenwich and Harrison Streets at a roughly estimated time of 4:15 p.m. The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.**

Figure 5–147 provides a view of the north face of WTC 7. The image is a frame taken from a digital video that was accurately timed. This frame was recorded just before 4:38 p.m. Even from the long distance from which the video was filmed, it is possible to see a heavy fire burning on one of the floors. Little or no smoke is evident on the north face, but dense black smoke is rising from the east face. This appears to be another example of fires burning on the north face exhausting through openings on a different face of the building.



**Figure 5-147. Frame from a video clip shot from the top of a nearby building, providing a view of the north face of WTC 7 at 4:37:46 p.m. ± 1 s.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted.

The videographer zoomed in on the north face of WTC 7 during the same clip from which the frame in Figure 5-147 was taken. Figure 5-148 and Figure 5-149 are two spatially overlapping close-up frames that, taken together, show portions of the 6<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup> floors just after 4:38 p.m. In Figure 5-149, the visible lengths of the floor extend from just east of column 45 to just west of column 47. All of the visible windows on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> floors were open at this time, while all of the windows on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors still had glass in place. Small spot fires are visible at numerous locations on the three floors with open windows.

In Figure 5-146, intense fires were visible on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> floors in the same windows visible in the video around 4:38 p.m. A less intense fire was also present on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. All of these fires had died down significantly by the time Figure 5-148 was recorded roughly 25 min later. Since the typical intense burning cycle for most of the fires observed in WTC 7 lasted about 20 min, it seems safe to conclude that the photograph shown in Figure 5-146 could not have been taken later than 4:28 p.m., consistent with the estimate of 4:15 p.m for the earlier image.



**Figure 5–148. Frame from a video clip showing a close up view of the north face of WTC 7 at 4:38:11 p.m. ± 1 s.** The video was shot from the same location as the frame in Figure 5–147. The image intensities were adjusted, and column and floor number have been added.



**Figure 5–149. Frame from a video clip showing a close up view of the north face of WTC 7 at 4:38:14 p.m. ± 1 s.** The video was shot from the same location as the frame in Figure 5–147. The image intensities were adjusted, and column and floor number have been added.

Figure 5–149 shows the visible portions of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> floors. The most prominent feature is the extensive fire present on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor between windows 11-44E and 11-46D. A dull red glow is visible through window 11-47A. This image provides the earliest evidence that the fire on this floor had reached the north face. There was no sign of a fire on this face in earlier images. Recall that a growing fire was observed on the east side of this floor as early as 2:08 p.m. It is remarkable that nearly two and a half hours were required for fire to finally appear on the north side. Even though there is substantial fire present on the floor, no smoke is visible coming from the open windows. This is another example where the fires were venting elsewhere.

All of the visible windows on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> floors are open in Figure 5–149. There is no indication of fire at these locations on either floor. All of the glass is in place for windows on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, and there is no indication that fire is present on this floor at this time.

Another partial view of the north face taken from street level at nearly the same time as Figure 5–148 and Figure 5–149 is shown in Figure 5–150. The photograph was shot on film, so a precise time could not be assigned. However, the same photographer shot an accurately timed digital photograph from nearly the same location at 4:39:19 p.m. The time for the film picture was therefore assigned as 4:39 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 2$  min. In Figure 5–149, the intense fire on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor did not extend beyond column 47, while in Figure 5–150 it appears to have moved beyond column 48, suggesting that the photograph may actually have been shot after the video frames.

More flames are evident on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> floors in the ground-level photograph than in the video frames shot looking down on the face. In Figure 5–150, the flames on these floors appear to be reddish and to be well removed from the windows. It is possible that these fires were actually so deep inside the building that they were hidden from the view looking down through the windows. As before, there are no indications of burning on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor in Figure 5–150.



**Figure 5–150. Cropped photograph showing part of the north face of WTC 7, shot from near the corner of Harrison and Greenwich Streets at 4:39 p.m.  $\pm 120$  s.**

The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers have been added.

### Fires on or below the 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, 4:40 p.m. to 5:21 p.m.

After roughly 4:40 p.m., imagery in the Investigation database showing the north face of WTC 7 is more limited. Figure 5–151 shows a long distance shot of the north face of WTC 7 taken at 4:52:24 p.m. from the same vantage point as Figure 5–147. In the video clip it can be seen that smoke is passing across the lower part of the north face. Unlike Figure 5–147, there is no fire visible on the north face from this distance. It seems the fires on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor have died down, but it is possible that fire was present, but hidden by the smoke. Heavy, dark smoke is still visible rising from the east face of the building.



**Figure 5–151. Frame from a video clip shot from the top of a nearby building, showing the north face of WTC 7 at 4:52:24 p.m. ± 1 s.**

The intensity levels have been adjusted.

Figure 5–152 shows a limited view of the north face shot from the northeast over the tops of the two buildings to the north of WTC 7. The time was crudely estimated as being around 5:00 p.m. based on the pattern of sunlight and shadow on the building to the immediate north of WTC 7. Only the 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> floors are visible. Fires are burning on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> floors. On the 12<sup>th</sup> floor, the fires that were slowly spreading across the north face to the west have reached the northwest corner, with flames barely visible in windows 12-57A and 12-57B. Recall that fire was observed between columns 55 and 56 around 4:00 p.m. At 2:00 p.m., the 12<sup>th</sup> floor was burning near the southeast corner. Apparently it took roughly three hours for fire to spread all of the way from the southeast corner to the northwest corner.





Source: Unknown

**Figure 5–152. Frame taken from a video clip shot over the buildings at 30 West Broadway and 70 Murray Street, showing the western edge of the north face of WTC 7 at about 5:00 p.m.**

The time uncertainty is at least ten minutes. The intensities have been adjusted, and column and floor numbers were added.

The fire on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor has burned westward as far as column 55. In Figure 5–144, which was estimated to have been taken around 3:55 p.m., flames were observed as far west as column 50. This fire was continuing to work its way to the west. There are no indications of fire burning in this area on floors higher than the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. In the video clip, some light smoke was visible blowing across the north face, but there was apparently little smoke coming from the open windows on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> floors, consistent with earlier observations that the effluent for fires on these floor vented at remote locations on other faces.

Figure 5–153 shows a view of the north face of WTC 7 looking down Greenwich Street at 5:03:00 pm.  $\pm$  2 min. The image is from a digitized video converted from film and is noisy. For this reason, column and floor numbers have not been added. Nonetheless, by comparison with Figure 5–139, which was shot from roughly the same location, some details concerning the fires can be discerned. Flames are only visible at one location on the face, namely near the top of the frame on the left side near the building at 30 West Broadway. Reference to Figure 5–139 suggests that this location is on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 45 and 46. If correct, this represents the first and only visual indication of a fire on this floor.



**Figure 5–153.** This frame from a video shot from a building to the northwest of WTC 7 was taken around 5:03:00 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 120$  s.

The intensities have been adjusted.

Light smoke is apparent, moving across the face from west to east in Figure 5–153. From the video, it is clear that this smoke is rising from the street just in front of WTC 7. In the figure flames are barely visible on a vehicle parked near the center of the building on Barclay Street. There is no indication of when or how this vehicle was ignited.

Another frame from the same video as Figure 5–153 is shown in Figure 5–154. This view is somewhat clearer. It was shot from roughly the same location at 5:09:03  $\pm 120$  s., or roughly 6 min later. In this image the fire present at the upper left-hand corner is no longer apparent, but a fairly intense fire has appeared further down on the face near the center of the visible area. Comparison with Figure 5–139 suggests this fire was located on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor near column 49. This location is just to the west of windows where fire was observed on the same floor in Figure 5–150 at 4:39 p.m. Apparently the fire on this floor paused briefly before continuing its movement to the west. Smoke can still be seen rising from the vehicle fire on the street below the face.



**Figure 5–154.** This frame from a video shot from a building to the northwest of WTC 7 was taken around 5:09:03 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 120$  s.

The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–155. Cropped photograph of the north face of WTC 7, taken from a building located to the northwest looking down Greenwich Street at 5:13:58 p.m.  $\pm$  3 s.**

A long distance partial view of the north face of WTC 7 shot at 5:13:58 p.m. is shown in Figure 5–155. No flames are visible except on the street at the base of the north face. While some smoke is visible passing over the north face, it is possible to discern the alternating granite spandrel covers and windows on the lower floors. This suggests that no major fires were present over the visible width of the floors. Smoke is still visible rising from the east face, but comparison with earlier similar views indicates that the smoke flow had decreased markedly.

Figure 5–156 shows a frame taken from a video shot at 5:19:45  $\pm$  2 min from roughly the same location as Figure 5–154. Even though the north face appears to be partially obscured by smoke or dust, fires are evident in multiple windows on the right side of the visible part of the north face. Comparison with



**Figure 5–156.** This frame from a video shot from a building to the northwest of WTC 7 was taken around 5:19:45 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 120$  s. The intensities have been adjusted.

Figure 5–139 indicates these windows lie around columns 50 and 51 on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. In the roughly 11 min between Figure 5–154 and Figure 5–156, the fires on this floor have continued to spread toward the west.

Figure 5–157 shows a closer view of the western edge of the north face of WTC 7 taken from a video clip recorded from the same location as that shown in Figure 5–152. This clip was recorded several minutes later than Figure 5–152, as is evident by the change in the shadow on the white building in the foreground. The clip was shot within a couple of minutes of the WTC 7 collapse at 5:20:52 p.m., consistent with the recollection of the videographer. At this time, flames are barely visible on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor at roughly the same location as in Figure 5–152. Heavy, dark smoke is visible rising along the east side of the building. There is also considerable smoke passing across the north face. The source of this smoke is not immediately obvious.

During the clip from which Figure 5–157 was taken, the camera zoomed in on the same area shown in Figure 5–152. Heavy smoke was visible rising from near the northwest corner. Suddenly, several pulses of jet flames several stories high were pushed out of a window near 13-54B on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. These pulses continued for about 6 s. Figure 5–158 shows a frame captured during one of these pulses.

The amount of smoke on the north face increased dramatically at the same time as the pulses. This is the only time that this unusual behavior was observed for WTC 7. Similar behaviors observed during the fires in the WTC towers (NCSTAR-1-5A) were attributed to internal pressure pulses generated by events such as local collapses within the buildings. Since the exact time for this particular event is unknown, it is not possible to associate it with a known event within WTC 7.

Figure 5–159 shows a view of the north face of WTC 7 just seconds before it began to collapse. It is a frame from a video clip shot from the northwest at 5:20:17 p.m.  $\pm 15$  s. Comparison with Figure 5–139 indicates that the fires visible in the image were located on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor between columns 50 and 52, showing that the fire on this floor was continuing to spread to the west just prior to the collapse of the building.



**Figure 5–157.** Frame taken from a video clip shot from the northeast, showing the north face of WTC 7 within a few minutes of the WTC 7 collapse at 5:20:52 p.m. The intensity levels were adjusted.



Source: Unknown

**Figure 5–158.** Frame taken from a video clip shot over the buildings at 30 West Broadway and 70 Murray Street, showing the western edge of the north face of WTC 7 within a few minutes of the WTC 7 collapse at 5:20:52 p.m.

The intensity levels were adjusted.



**Figure 5–159. This frame from a video shot from a building to the northwest of WTC 7 was taken around 5:20:17 p.m. with an uncertainty of  $\pm 15$  s. The intensities have been adjusted.**

#### 5.6.4 Summary of Fire Spread Observations in WTC 7

##### General

Even though available images showing the fires in WTC 7 do not allow the detailed description of fire spread that was possible for the WTC towers (NCSTAR 1-5A), there is sufficient information to derive general descriptions of fire ignition and spread on various floors of the building. Here, the observations of the previous two subsections are summarized. At the end of the subsection, a number of fire maps derived from specific images are provided. These maps are then utilized to derive summary maps for the east and north faces showing where fires were observed. It must be kept in mind that the fire observations are based on images of the exterior faces. These images provide little indication about the behavior of fires well removed from the exterior walls.

By the time that imagery of the WTC 7 faces started to become available around 11:00 a.m., following the collapse of WTC 1, numerous vehicles around WTC 7 were on fire and burning intensely. It is likely that nascent fires were also growing within WTC 7 around the same time, but direct visual evidence for fires in the building is not available until around noon. Early fires were primarily observed on higher floors, even though the heavy smoke pouring from the large opening on the south face created by falling debris suggested fires were also present on lower floors.

The evidence shows that early fires were ignited on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> floors. These fires were observed at the southwest corners. The images indicate that, while these fires grew large enough to break nearby glass from windows and to spread to the north along the west face, they generally did not spread far before dying out. Possibly, these fires covered larger areas along the south sides of the floors, but this could not be confirmed due to limited imagery and smoke obscuration. There was no indication of fires on these floors later in the afternoon on the east, north, or west walls.

Between roughly 2:00 p.m. and the collapse of WTC 7 at 5:20:52 p.m., fires were observed spreading on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor through the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, with the exception of the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. One short video clip indicated that a small fire was present on the north side of the 14<sup>th</sup> floor shortly prior to the collapse. In the following descriptions of these fires, approximate times are used. Details concerning actual times and uncertainties are included in the previous subsection.

## **7<sup>th</sup> Floor**

Early indications of a developing fire were observed on the west side of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor shortly after 2:00 p.m. This fire spread north along the west face. Initially, very little smoke was released from nearby windows. Heavy smoke eventually appeared from the windows on the west side nearest the north face. The evidence suggests that the fire spreading along the west side turned the northwest corner and began to spread east across the north side sometime prior to 3:00 p.m.

The fire on the north side spread eastward relatively quickly, reaching column 47 by 3:12 p.m. The fire appeared to stop spreading after reaching this point, and the flames died away. Only indications of small localized spot fires to the west of column 47 were then observed until around 4:15 p.m. Roughly 10 min after this time, a large fire had developed to the east of column 47. By 4:38:11 p.m., the last image available, windows were open at least as far east as 7-44D, and the new flames had already died down. No additional images are available to indicate the fire behavior further to the east on this floor. It is likely that the fire continued spreading toward the east face.

In general, with the exception of the north side of the west face, little smoke was released from the west and north face windows by the fires on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. It is likely that the fires on these sides of the floor vented through the south face during the period that burning was observed.

## **8<sup>th</sup> Floor**

The earliest fires observed on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor were on the north face in windows near the center of the face. As late as 3:22 p.m., there was no indication of fire in this area, but about 17 min later a substantial fire spreading to the east was visible between windows 8-47C and 8-53C. The extent of the fire further west at this time is not clear. NIST found no evidence showing where this fast developing fire first appeared on the north face. Later observations, around 3:42 p.m., of intense burning on the north side of the west face at the same time that fires were dying at nearby locations on the north face suggest that the fire initially bypassed the northwest corner, only burning out this area after the fire became established on the north face.

The rapid development and flame spread on the north side of the floor continued after the fires were first observed, and flames reached the east face around 3:55 p.m. Even though little smoke and flame were visible coming from north face windows located close to the flames, extremely intense external flaming developed on the east face when the fire reached that location. This is strong evidence that the ambient wind and associated external pressure variations around WTC 7 had a large effect on the appearance of flames in windows on the different faces.

By shortly after 4:00 p.m., much of the burning near the center of the north face had died down. The small fires that were observed appeared to be located well away from the exterior wall.

## 9<sup>th</sup> Floor

There was no indication of fire in the available imagery on this floor until late in the day. Shortly before 4:00 p.m., a small area of fire was observed in windows 9-54A and 9-54B on the west side of the north face. There are no images suggesting how fire reached this location. Views of the floor as little as 10 min earlier provided no indication that a fire was present.

Once the fire appeared, it grew rapidly and spread to the east. By around 4:10 p.m., flames had reached at least as far east as window 9-49B; roughly ten minutes later, flames were visible between windows 9-45B and 9-52D. There were indications that the flames on the west side of this group of windows were already beginning to die down. At 4:38:11 p.m., only small spot fires were visible between windows 9-44D and 9-47B.

Limited smoke and flames exited through open windows on the north face, suggesting the fires vented elsewhere from the building.

NIST found no evidence regarding fire behavior after 4:40 p.m. It is possible that the fires continued to spread eastward and moved onto the east face.

## 10<sup>th</sup> Floor

No fires were observed burning on this floor.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Floor

A fire was first observed on this floor at 2:08 p.m. on the east face. Windows 11-29 and 11-30 near the southeast corner were open. The appearance of the smoke patterns above these windows suggested that these flames had burned intensely prior to this time. Over the next 20 min, the fire spread slowly northward along the east face, breaking out window glass and burning intensely at windows 11-31 to 11-35.

It was longer than two hours before burning was observed at another location on this floor. Images taken around 4:38 p.m. revealed intense burning in windows 11-44E to 11-46D, just east of the center of the north face. There had been no indication of burning along the entire north side of this floor in imagery taken around 4:00 p.m., or even in the same area where the fire first reappeared as late as 15 min earlier. Shortly after the flames first appeared on the north face, a photograph showed intense burning in windows 11-45C to 11-48A. By around 4:52 p.m., the flames in the area had apparently died down, and flames on this floor were not observed again until around 5:10 p.m.

Burning was observed localized around column 11-49 at 5:09 p.m. Ten minutes later the fire had spread to the west and was visible between columns 49 and 51. When the building fell, around 5:21 p.m., fire was visible as far west as column 52.

NIST found no evidence regarding the pathway that the fire took to reach the north face, nor when the flames first arrived on this face.



Despite the presence of intense burning on the north face, only light smoke and flame were visible coming from the open windows. This indicates the fire effluent was venting elsewhere on this floor.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Floor

The first observation of a fire on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor was on the east face around 2:08 p.m. A clear view of this face at 2:11 p.m. showed flames coming from windows 12-29 to 12-34 on the south side of the face, with window 12-35 open. Glass was still in place in windows 12-28A and 12-28B at the south edge, indicating that the fire likely had bypassed the southeast corner as it moved from the south face onto the east. By around 2:30 p.m., the intense flames originally seen on the east face were dying down, while the fire had spread south into the southeast corner and as far north as window 12-38, two-thirds of the way to the northeast corner.

The next time an image showed fire on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor was just before 3:00 p.m., when flames were observed between windows 12-44C and 12-45C, east of center on the north face. The fire had apparently bypassed the northeast corner of the floor and spread internally to the north face. In less than 15 min, the fire on the north face spread rapidly to the east to fully engulf the northeast corner of the floor and more slowly to the west, reaching as far as column 47. Over the following 40 min, the fire spread to the west in starts and stops, sometimes bypassing groups of windows before later opening them. By around 3:45 p.m., flames had appeared between column 55 and 56, toward the west end of the north face. After this time, views of windows further to the west were limited. An image taken around 5:00 p.m. showed that the fire had continued spreading west, and intense flames were coming from windows on the north face at the northwest corner.

In general, heavy smoke and flames were observed coming from windows on the east side of the building, while only limited amounts were released from north face windows. This is strong evidence that the pressure differences on the faces due to the ambient wind generated internal flows within the building that transported fire effluent away from the west and north faces and toward the south and east faces.

## 13<sup>th</sup> Floor

The first visual evidence for burning on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor was seen on the east face around 2:30 p.m. An untimed photograph showed intense smoke and flame coming from windows across much of the east face somewhat later. The evidence suggests that a fire burned along the east side of the face, turned at the northeast corner, and began spreading across the north face. NIST found no evidence concerning this fire spread, but flames had reached column 46, east of the center of the north face, at about 3:41 p.m. Imagery from around this time showed that many windows between the east face and column 46 were already open. By shortly after 4:00 p.m. flames had spread at least as far west as column 50. At 4:38 p.m., the windows between 13-44A and 13-47C (just east of the center of the north face) were open, and the fires responsible for opening the windows had died down to the point where they could no longer be observed.

The next time that flames were observed on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor was around 5:00 p.m., when intense burning was observed between windows 13-53D and 13-54D, to the west of the center of the north face. A couple of minutes prior to the collapse of the building at 5:20:52 p.m. a jet of flames was pushed from windows in the same area. NIST found no evidence regarding the cause of this unusual behavior, but the behavior

is similar to smoke and flame expulsions observed in the WTC towers prior to their collapses that were attributed to pressure pulses associated with structural changes (e.g., a partial floor collapse) occurring within the tower.

The limited smoke and external burning observed on the north face indicated that the effluent from fires along the north edge of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor vented elsewhere from the building.

### 14<sup>th</sup> Floor









A low resolution image recorded around 5:03 p.m. indicated the presence of a fire between columns 45 and 46 on the north face. Fire at this location or elsewhere on the floor was not evident in similar images recorded roughly ten minutes earlier and six minutes later. This was the only observation of a fire on this floor.

### Fires on Other Floors

With the exception of the fires on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> floors discussed at the start of this section, there is no direct visual evidence of fires on other floors of WTC 7. Heavy smoke was observed coming from the opening created on the south face of WTC 7 by debris falling from WTC 1. This smoke suggests that internal burning was taking place, but provides little indication of specific locations. Light smoke was observed at the height of the louvers on the east side of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors around 4:10 p.m. It was not possible to identify the source of this smoke.

#### 5.6.5 Façade maps of Fire Location and Window Breakage in WTC 7 at Various Times

In the following subsection, façade maps indicating the locations of open windows and fires are provided as a function of time. These maps are based on the imagery discussed above. The color codes used for window condition and fire intensity are shown in Figure 5–28, reproduced below.

Fire Visible	No fire		(white)
	Spot fire		(yellow)
	Fire visible inside		(red)
	External flaming		(orange)
	Not visible		(blue)
Windows	Window open		(white)
	Window glass intact		(gray)
	Not visible		(blue)

East Face

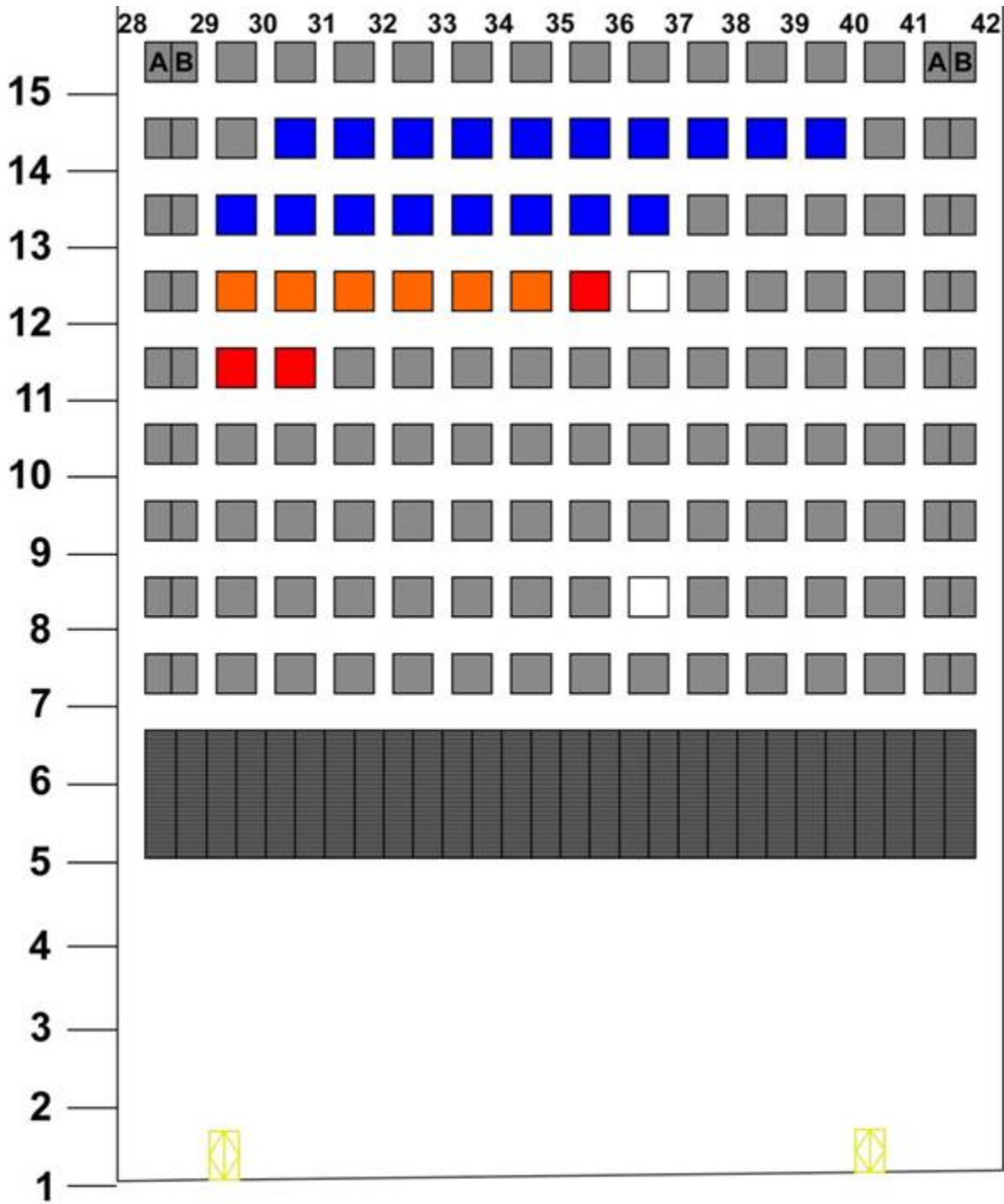
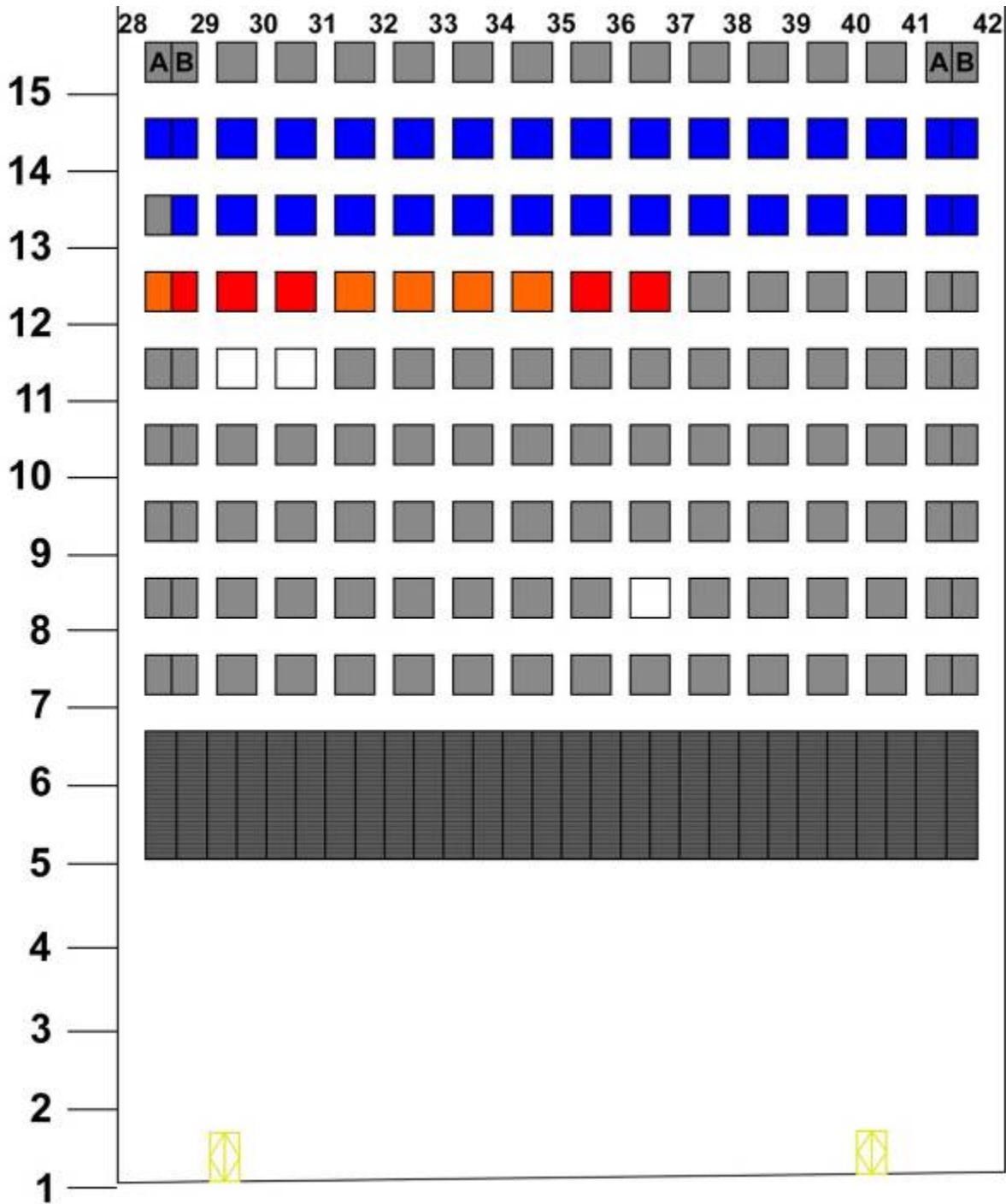


Figure 5–160. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the east face of WTC 7 around 2:10 p.m. It is based on Figure 5–115 and a second photograph taken 15 s earlier.



**Figure 5–161. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the east face of WTC 7 around 2:14 p.m.**  
 It is based on two photographs taken within a few seconds of each other.

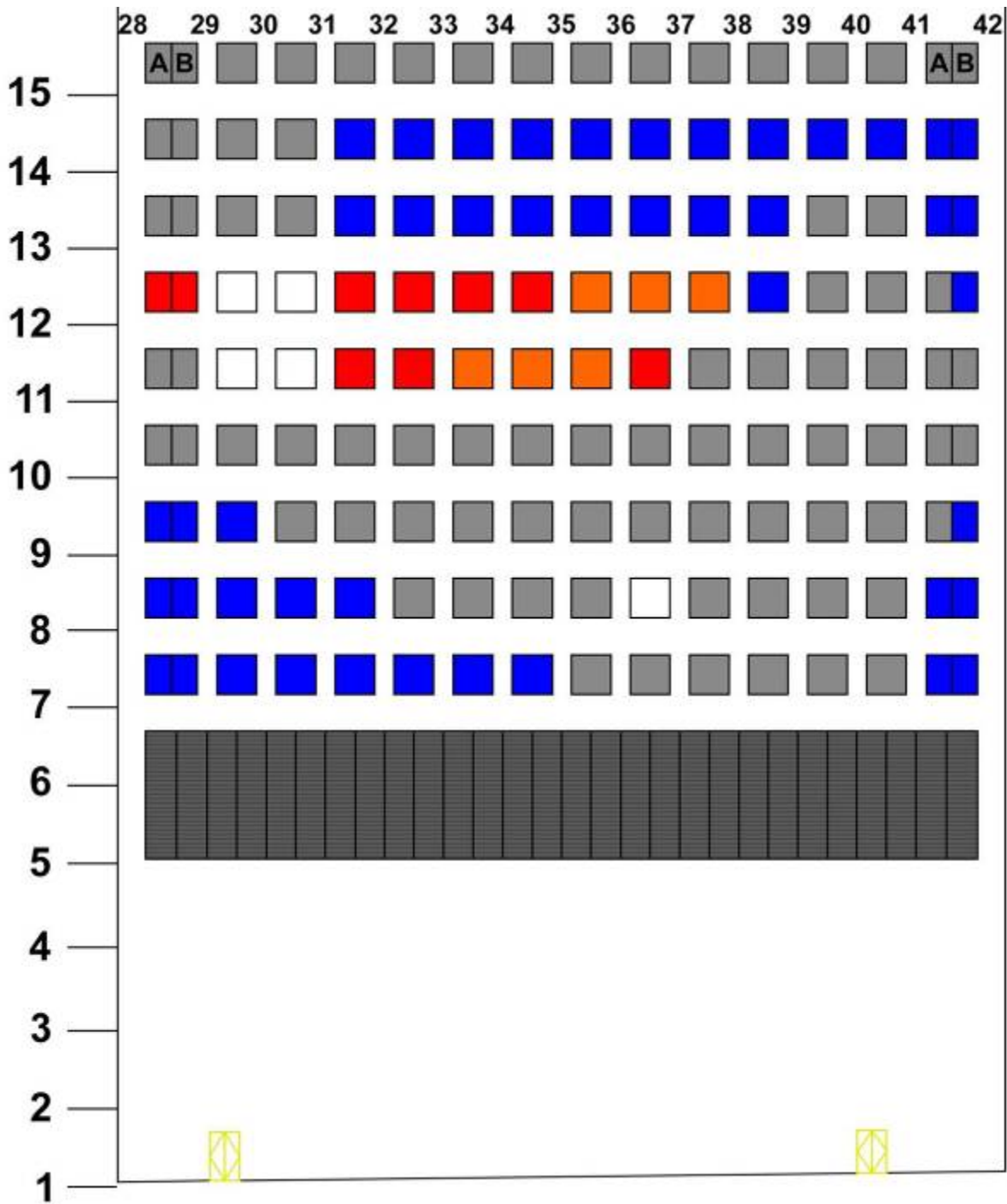


Figure 5–162. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the east face of WTC 7 around 2:30 p.m. It is based on Figure 5–117.

North Face

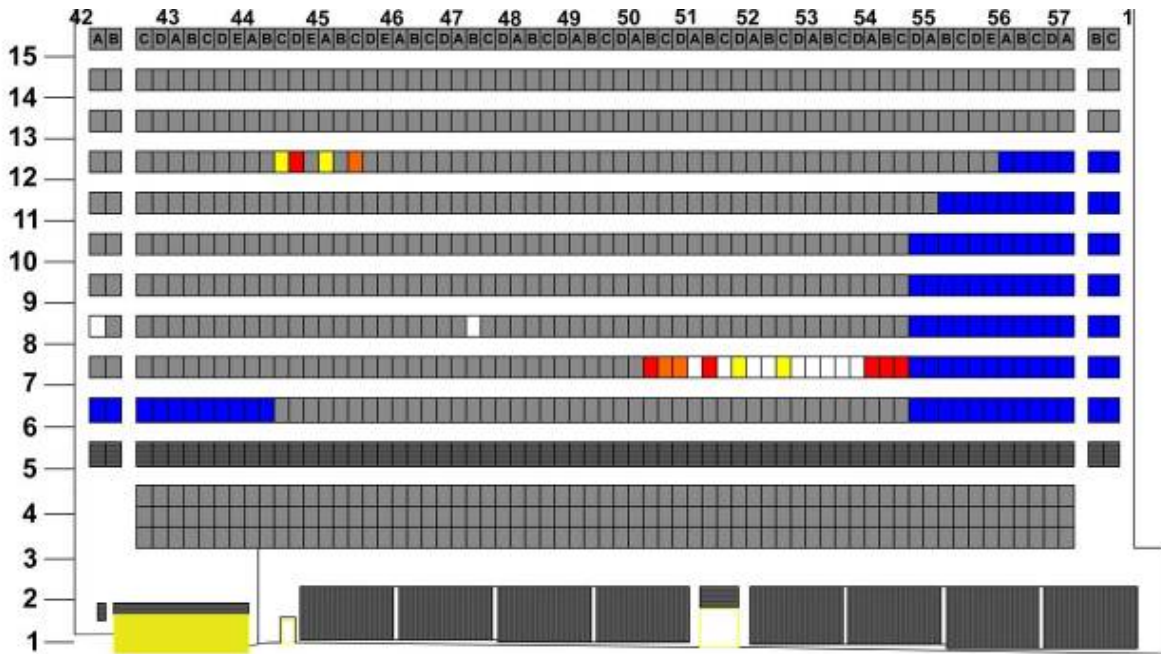


Figure 5-163. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 2:57 p.m.  
It is based on Figure 5-119.

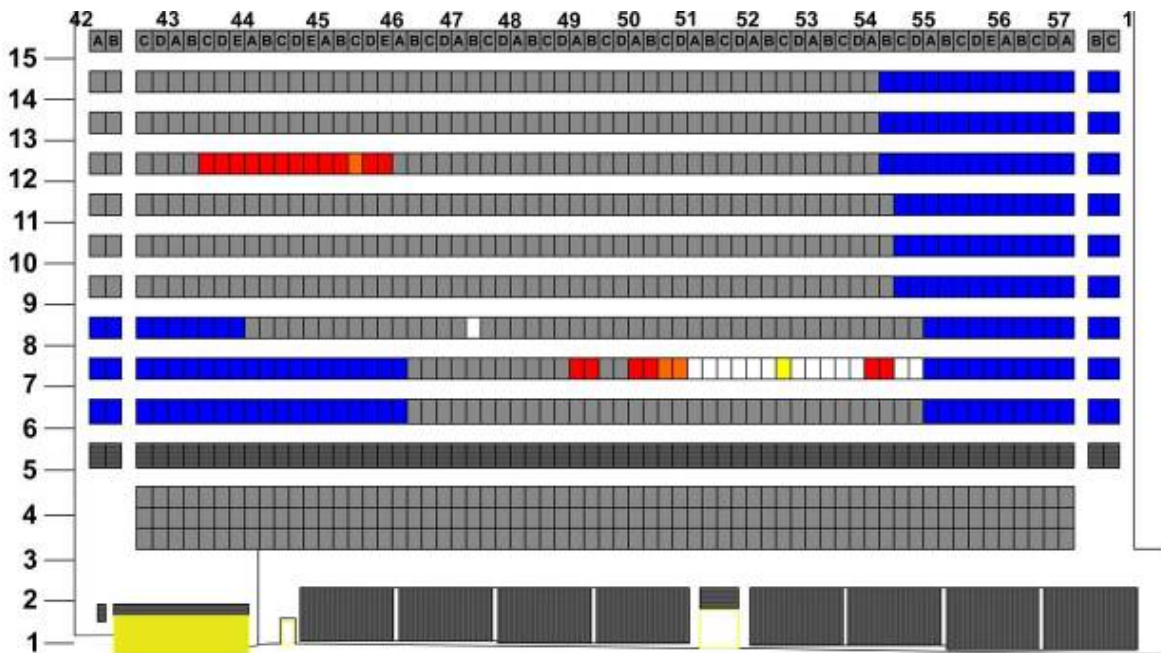
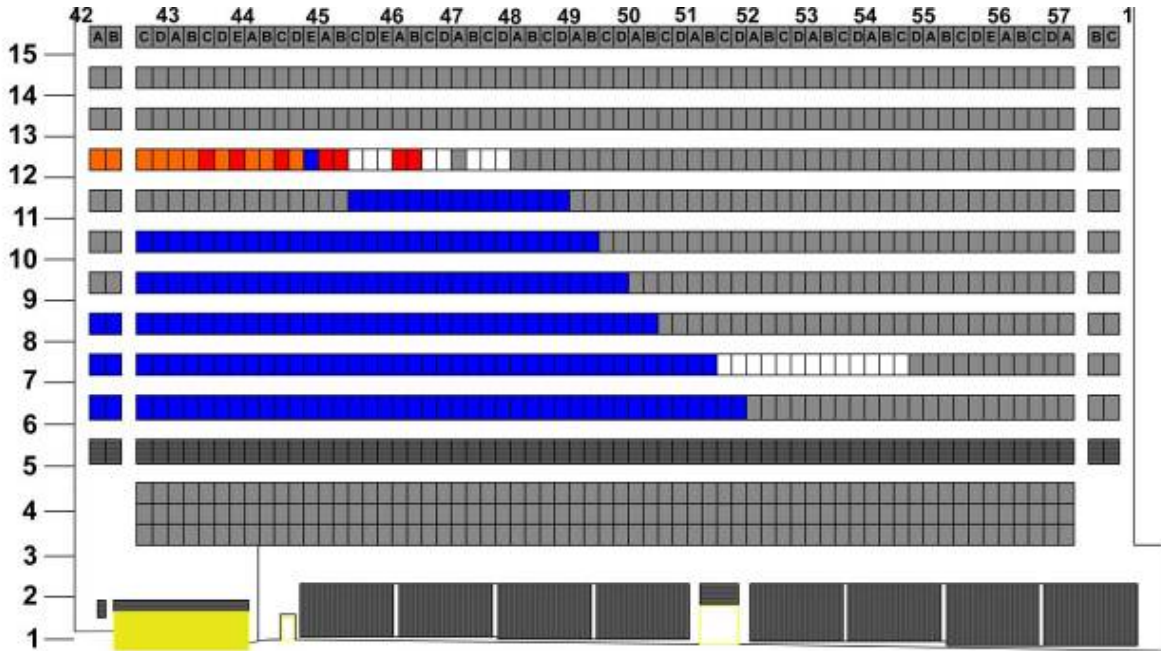
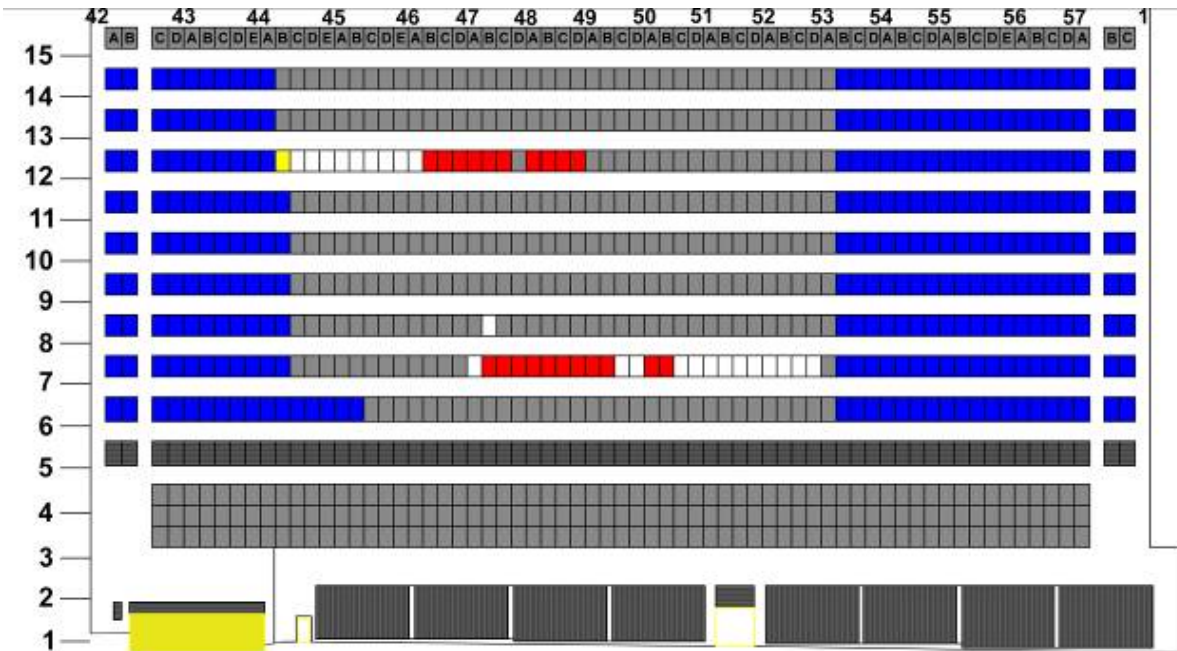


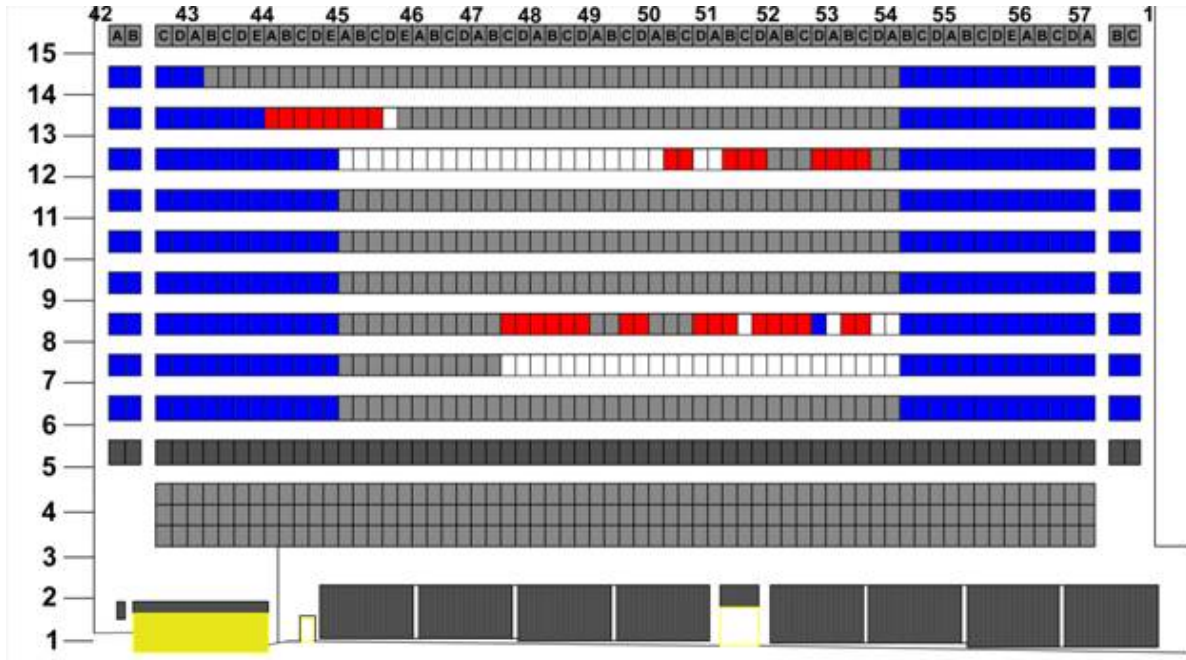
Figure 5-164. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:05 p.m.  
It is based on Figure 5-121.



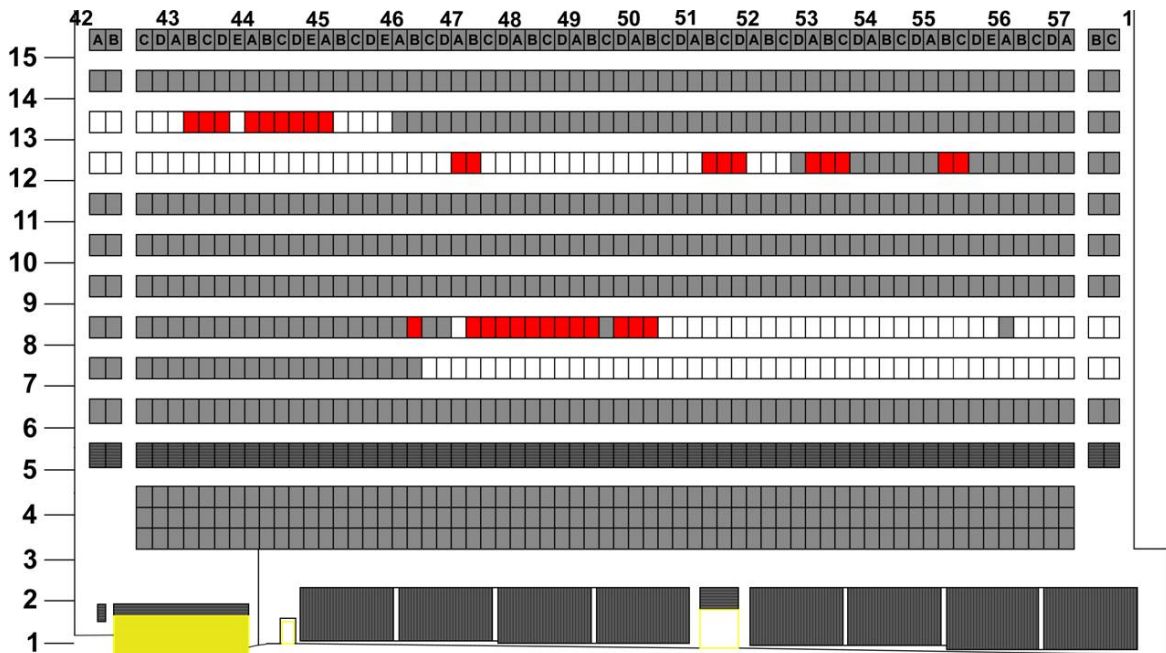
**Figure 5–165.** This façade map summarizes observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:10 p.m.  
It is based on Figure 5–123.



**Figure 5–166.** Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:13 p.m.  
It is based on Figure 5–127.

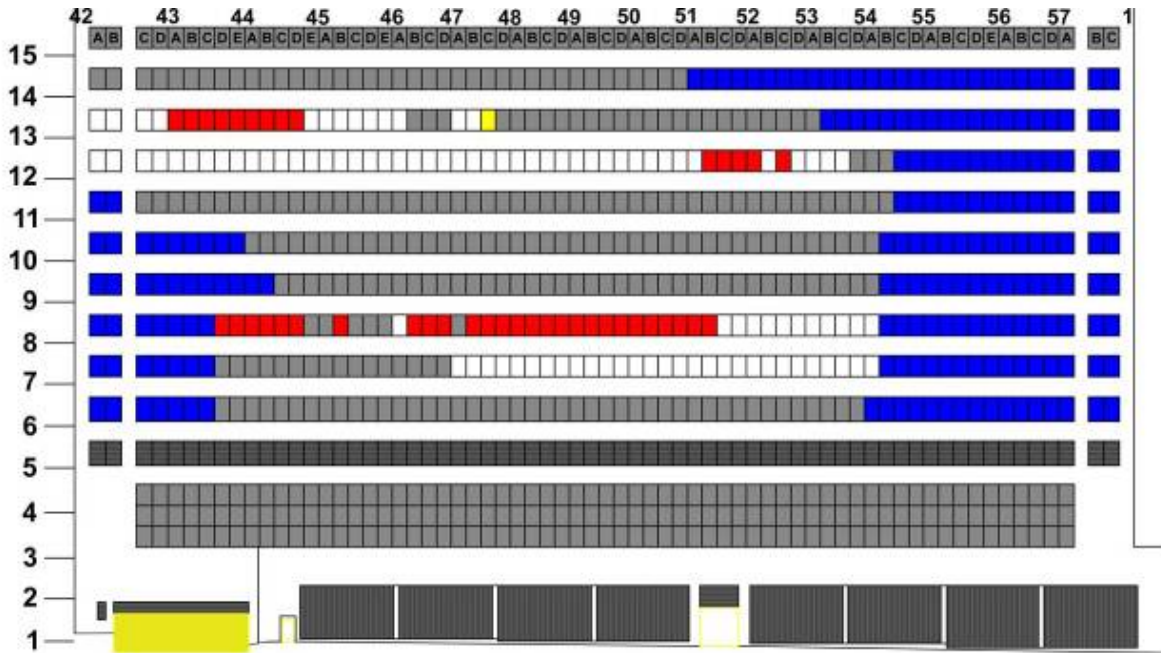


**Figure 5-167. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:42 p.m.**  
It is based on Figure 5-128 and Figure 5-130.



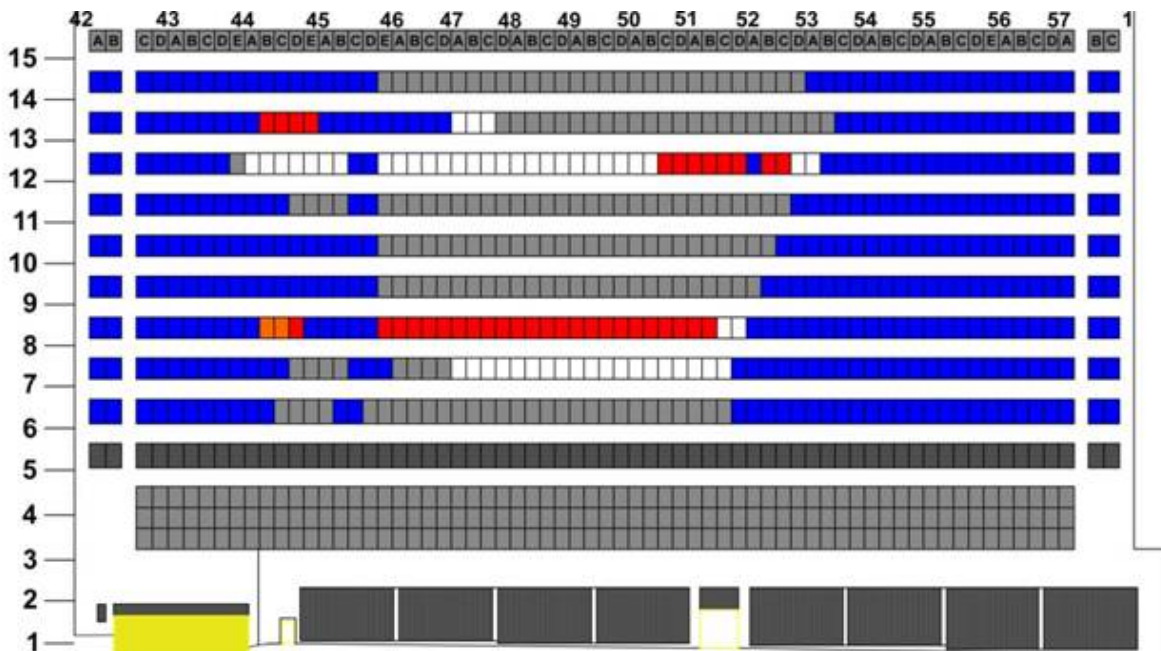
**Figure 5-168. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:44 p.m.**  
It is based on Figure 5-134 and the video clip from which it was taken.





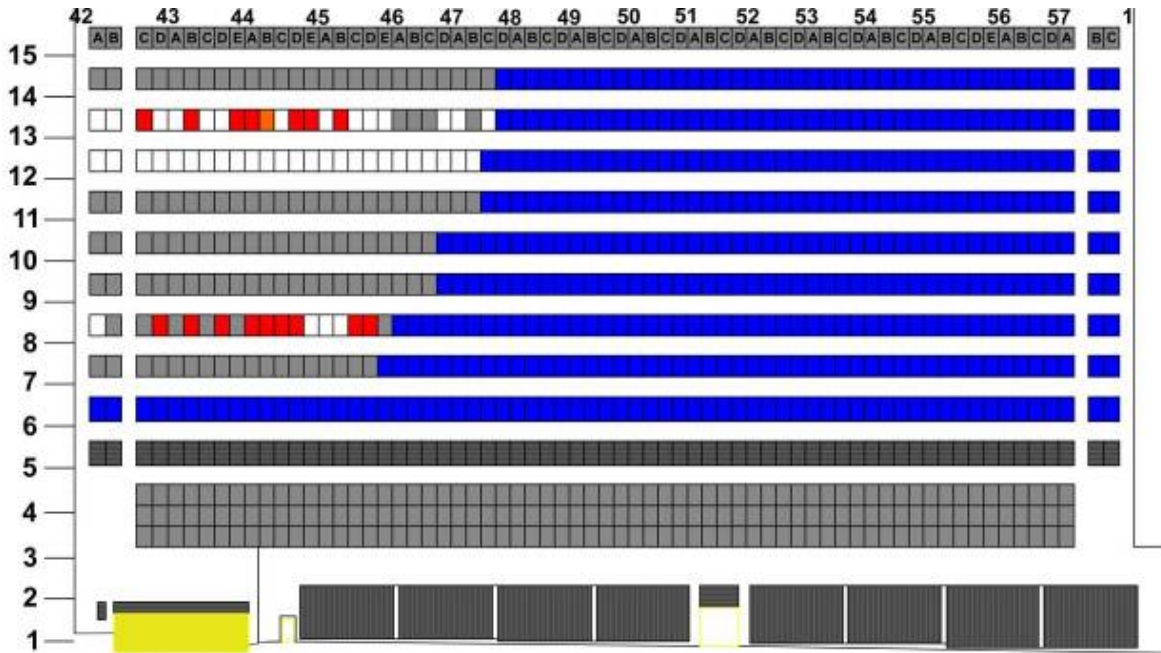
**Figure 5–169. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:52 p.m.**

It is based on Figure 5–136 and the video clip from which it was taken.



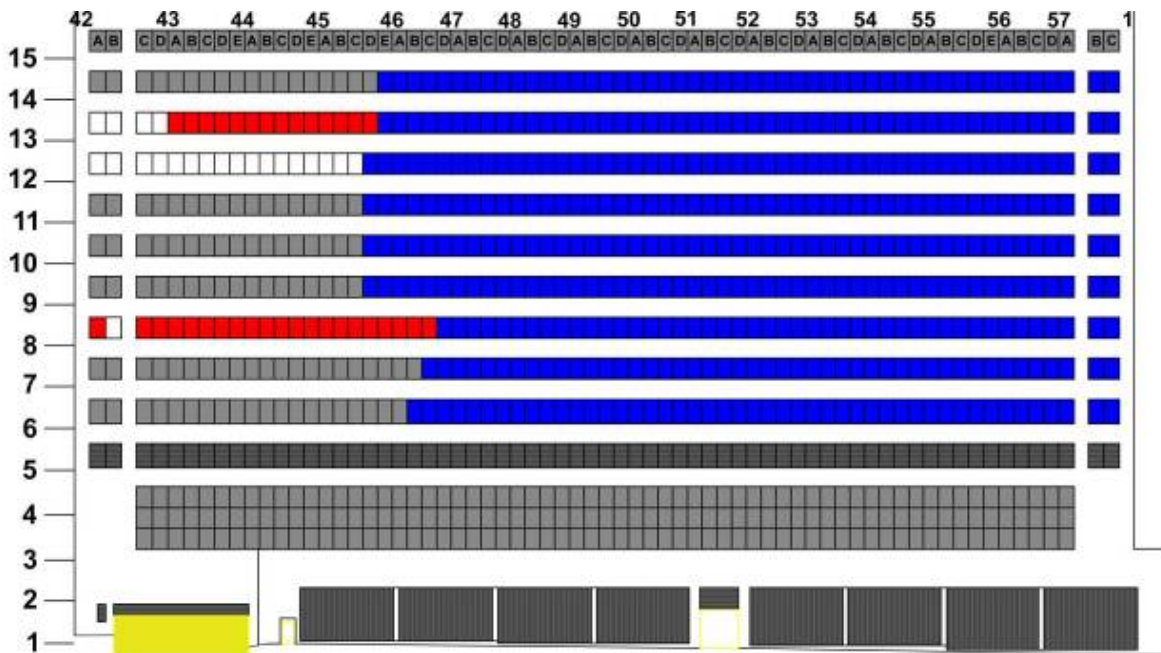
**Figure 5–170. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:55 p.m.**

It is based on Figure 5–140 and the video clip from which it was taken.



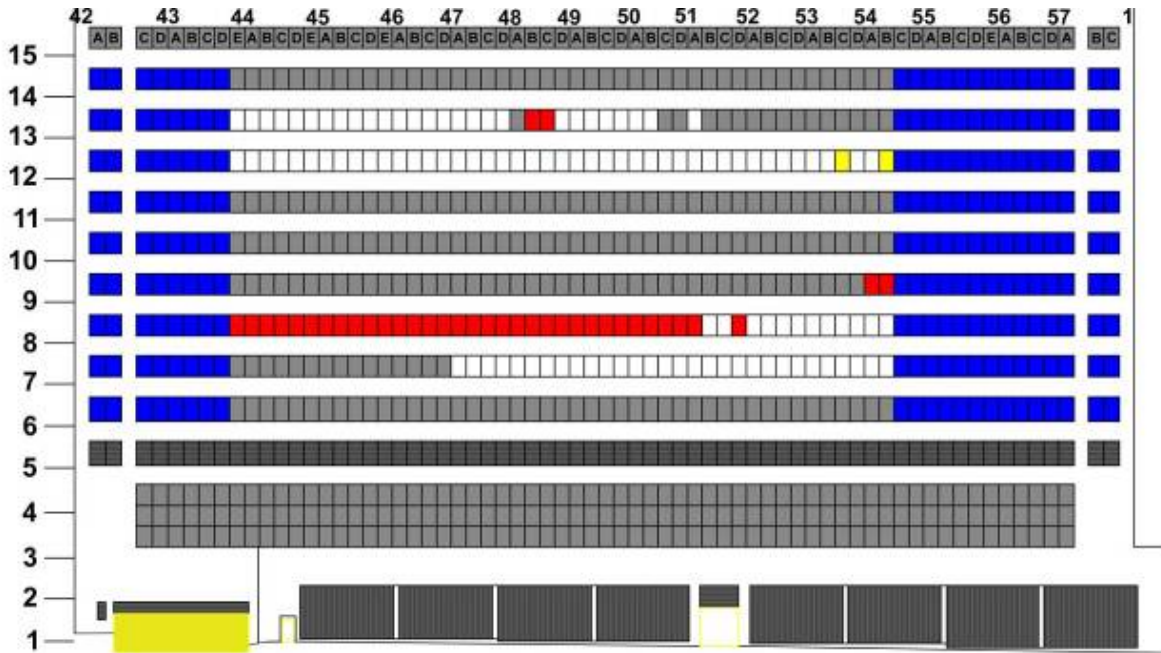
**Figure 5–171. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:57 p.m.**

It is based on Figure 5–141 and the video clip from which it was taken.



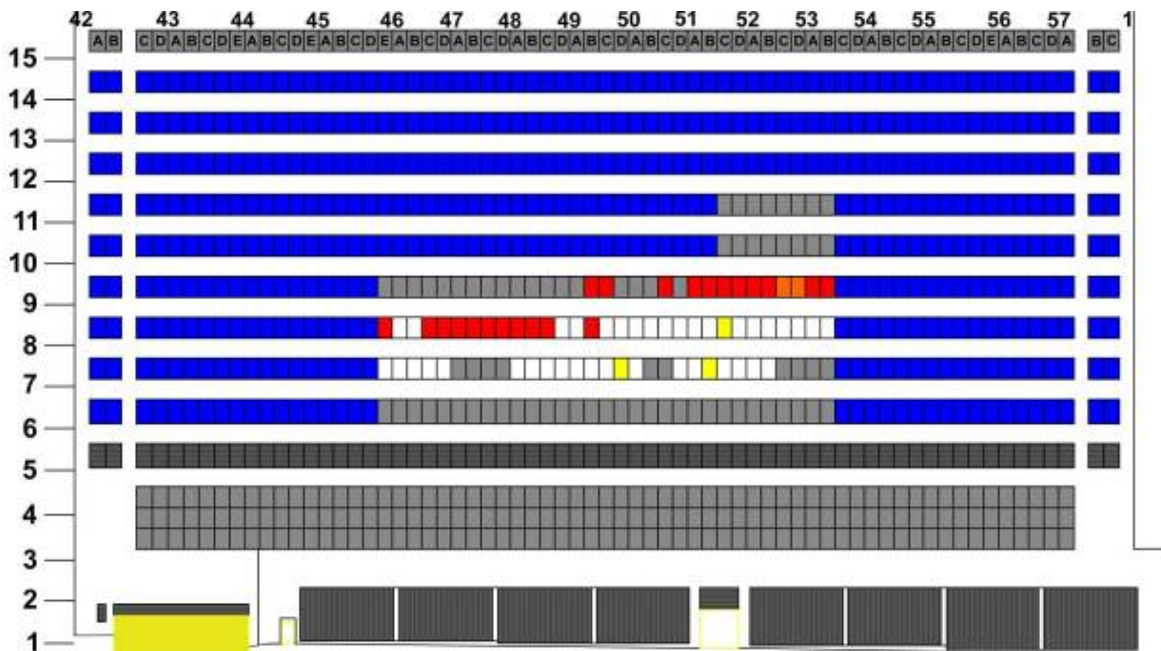
**Figure 5–172. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 4:00 p.m.**

It is based on Figure 5–142 and the video clip from which it was taken.



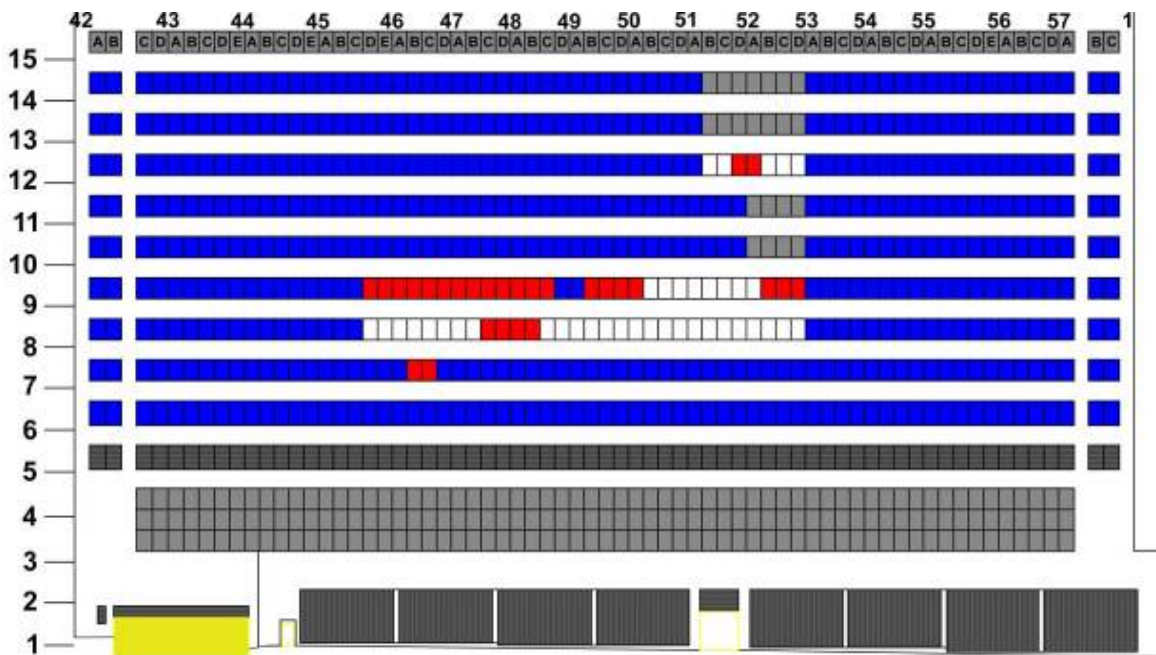
**Figure 5–173. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 3:55 p.m.**

It is based on Figure 5–144.

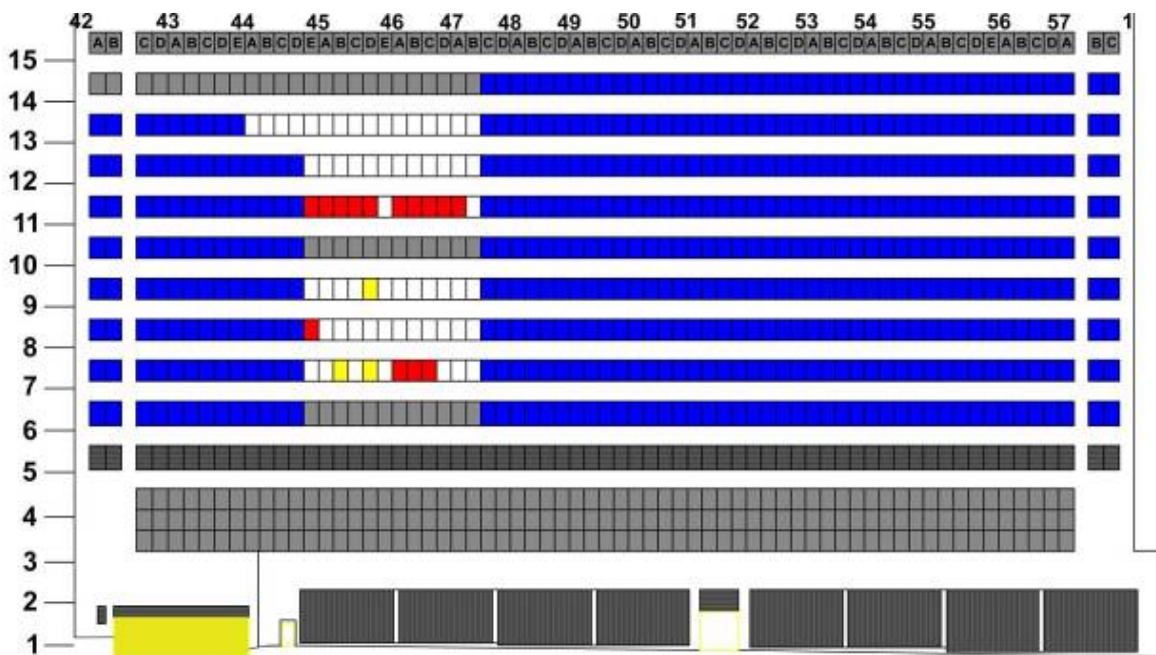


**Figure 5–174. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 4:10 p.m.**

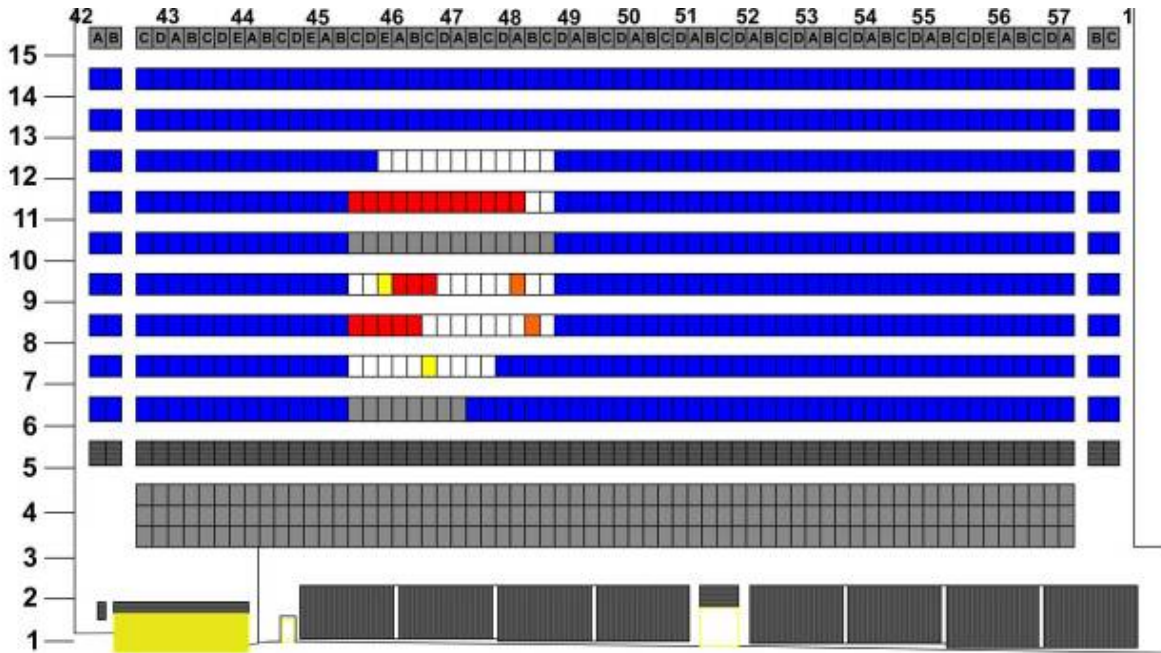
It is based on Figure 5–145 and the video clip from which it was taken.



**Figure 5-175. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 4:15 p.m.**  
 It is based on Figure 5-146 and a second photograph taken at roughly the same time.

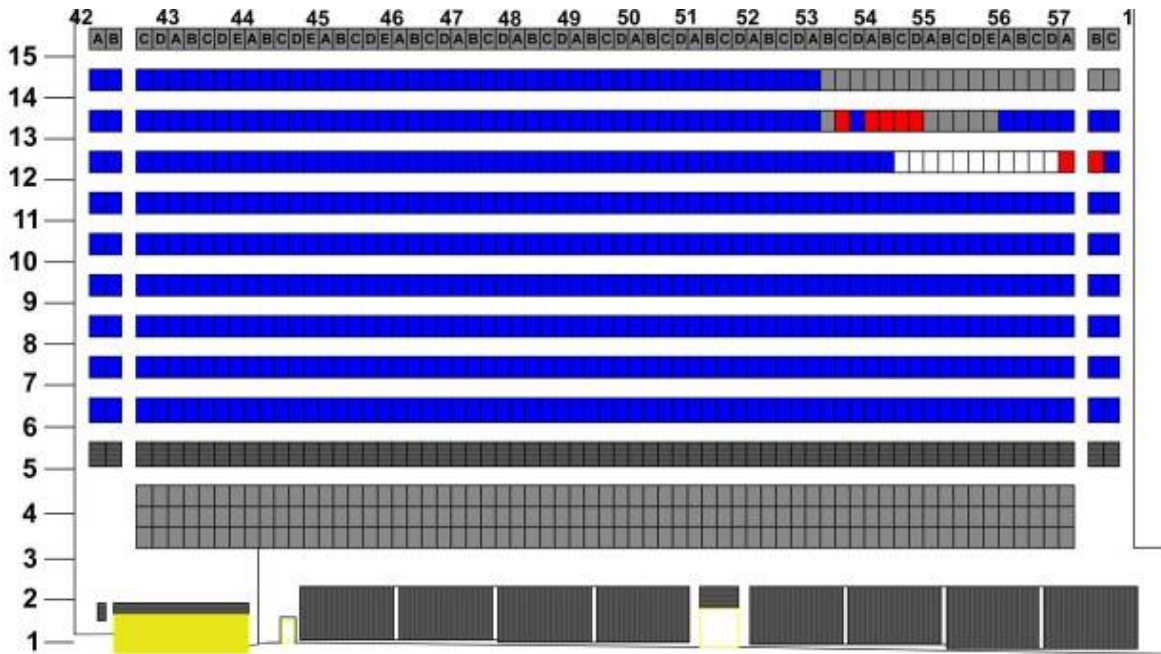


**Figure 5-176. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 at 4:38:11 p.m.**  
 It is based on Figure 5-148 and Figure 5-149 and the video clip from which these frames were taken.



**Figure 5-177. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 4:39 p.m.**

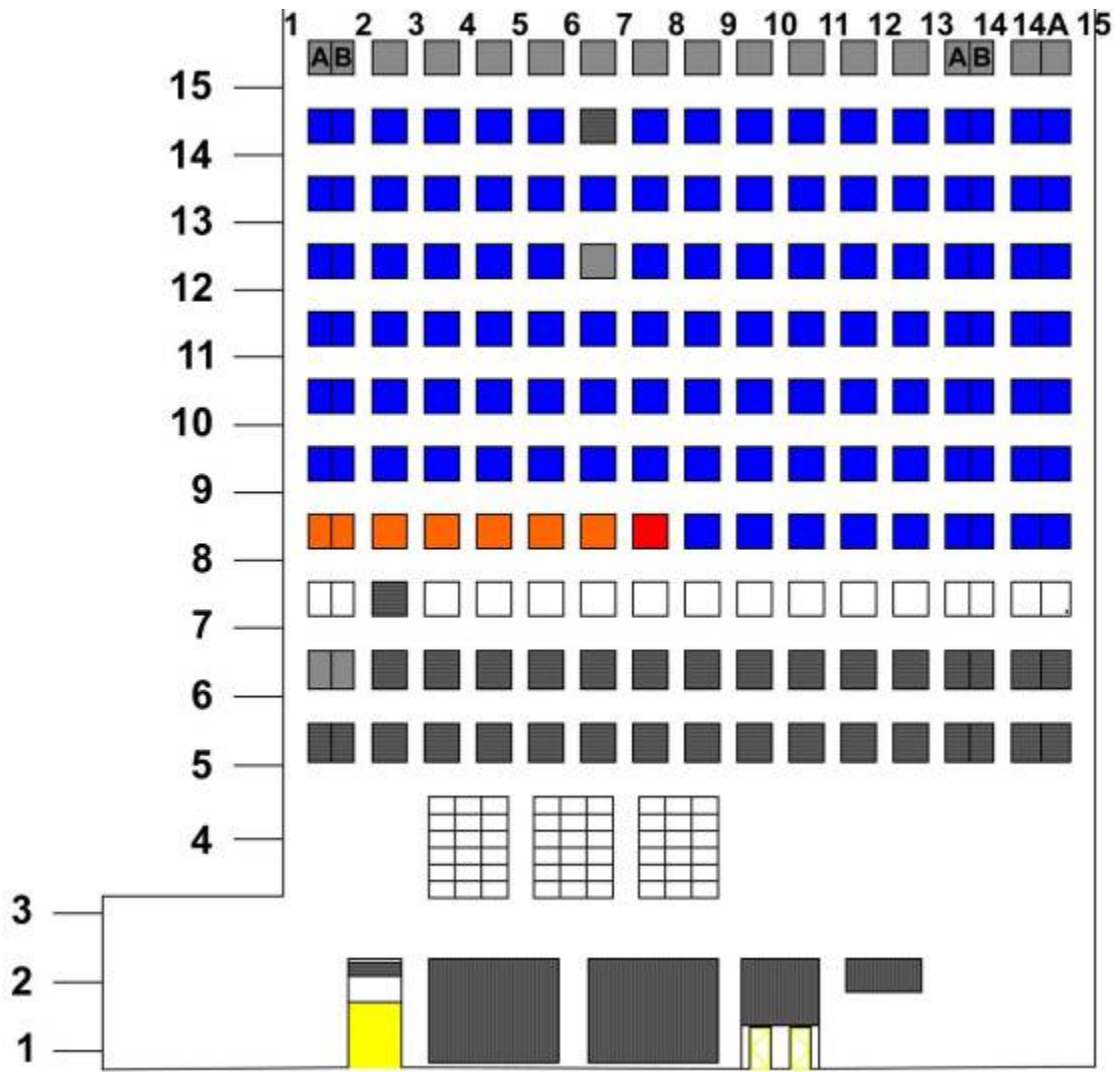
It is based on Figure 5-150.



**Figure 5-178. Façade map summarizing observations of fires and open windows on the north face of WTC 7 around 5:00 p.m.**

It is based on Figure 5-152 and the video clip from which it was taken.

West Face

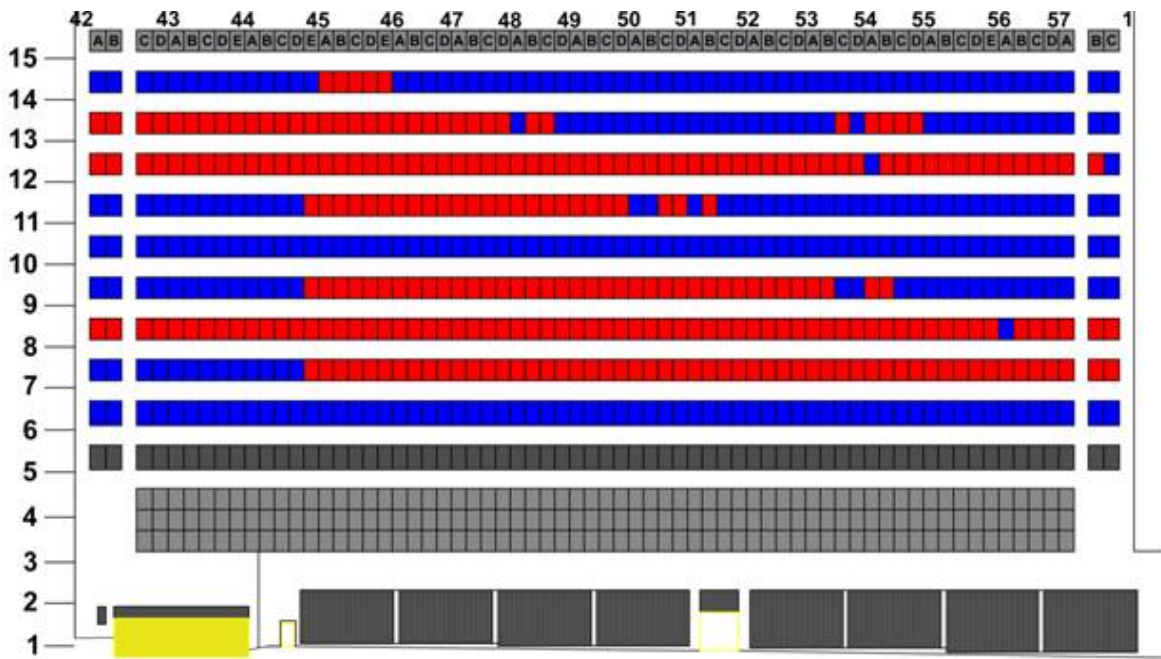


**Figure 5–179. This façade map summarizes observations of fires and open windows on the west face of WTC 7 around 3:52 p.m.**  
 It is based on several video clips including the one from which Figure 5–132 and Figure 5–133 were taken.

### 5.6.6 Summary Graphics of Total Fire Extent in WTC 7

In order to provide a better indication of the extent of the fires, three summary façade maps have been prepared. These maps utilize only two colors. Red represents windows where the glass was broken and/or fire was observed through the window. The remaining windows are colored blue, indicating that no direct evidence was observed for fires at these locations. It is very likely that fires burned adjacent to some of these windows, but, due to the limited imagery available, were not observed.

Each map was prepared by simply integrating the various data sheets available for this face and transposing the results onto the façade drawing and incorporating additional information discussed in the text.



**Figure 5–180. Façade map of the north face of WTC 7 showing where windows were broken and/or fire was observed during the period when fire first appeared on the face shortly before 3:00 p.m. until the building collapsed at 5:20:52 p.m.**

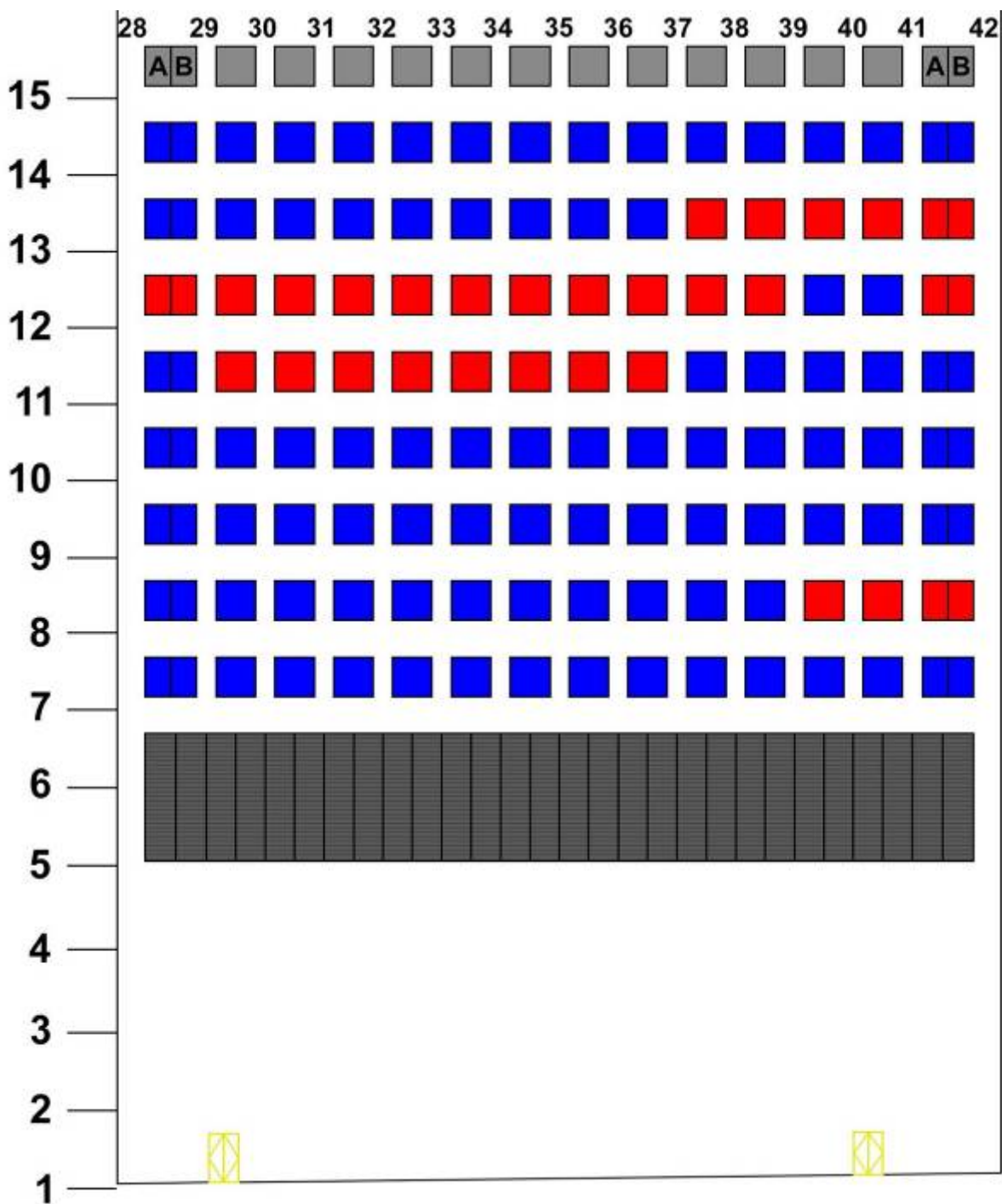


Figure 5–181. Façade map of the east face of WTC 7 showing locations where windows were broken and/or fire was observed during the period when fire first appeared on the face around 2:00 p.m. and the building collapsed at 5:20:52 p.m.



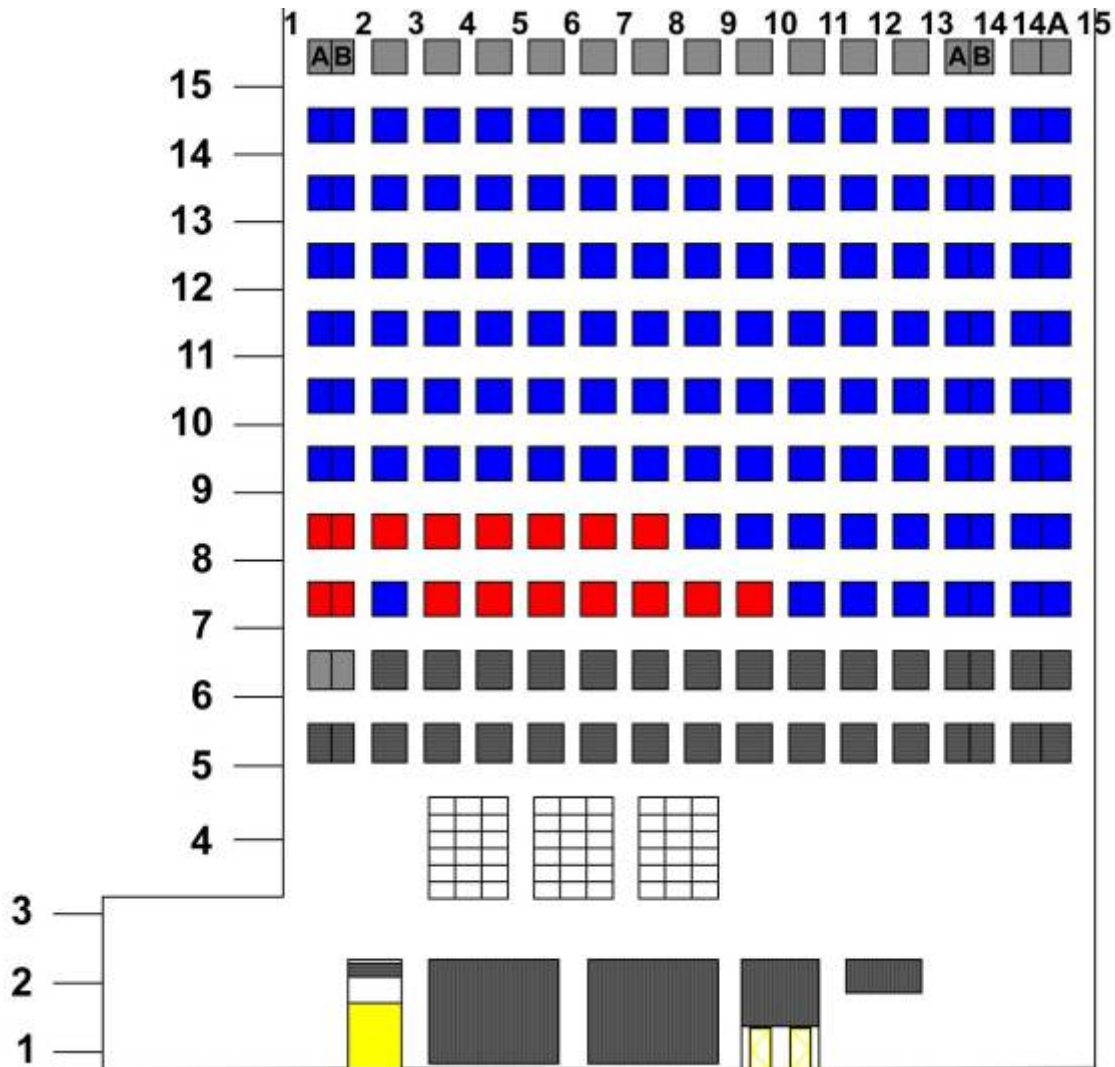


Figure 5–182. Façade map of the west face of WTC 7 showing locations where windows were broken and/or fire was observed during the period when fire first appeared on the face before 2:00 p.m. and the building collapsed at 5:20:52 p.m.

## 5.7 OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS OF THE WTC 7 COLLAPSE

### 5.7.1 The Nine Videos

WTC 7 began to collapse at 5:20:52 p.m. The collapse time was defined as the time when the north face of the building first began to move downward. As will be shown, shortly before this time, the east penthouse descended into the roof of the building, with a break along the penthouse roof as it did so. As discussed in Appendix C, there was movement of the building just before the east penthouse began to descend.

The visual database contains 16 videos showing at least a portion of the collapse of WTC 7. Nine of these were selected for more detailed analysis; each of these nine cameras was primarily located to the

north of the WTC complex. Attributes of these nine videos are listed in Table 5–2, and a map indicating the locations of the cameras relative to WTC 7 is shown in Figure 5–183.

Using video analysis software, the nine video clips were placed on a common timeline by matching various events, such as collapse initiation and window breakage. The maximum estimated uncertainty in assigning relative times is 6 frames or 0.2 s. For the analyses that follow, 0 s is defined as the time when the east penthouse began to descend into WTC 7. Note that this event occurred prior to 5:20:52 p.m. The actual time will be provided below.

**Table 5–2. Attributes of videos used for analysis of the collapse of WTC 7.**

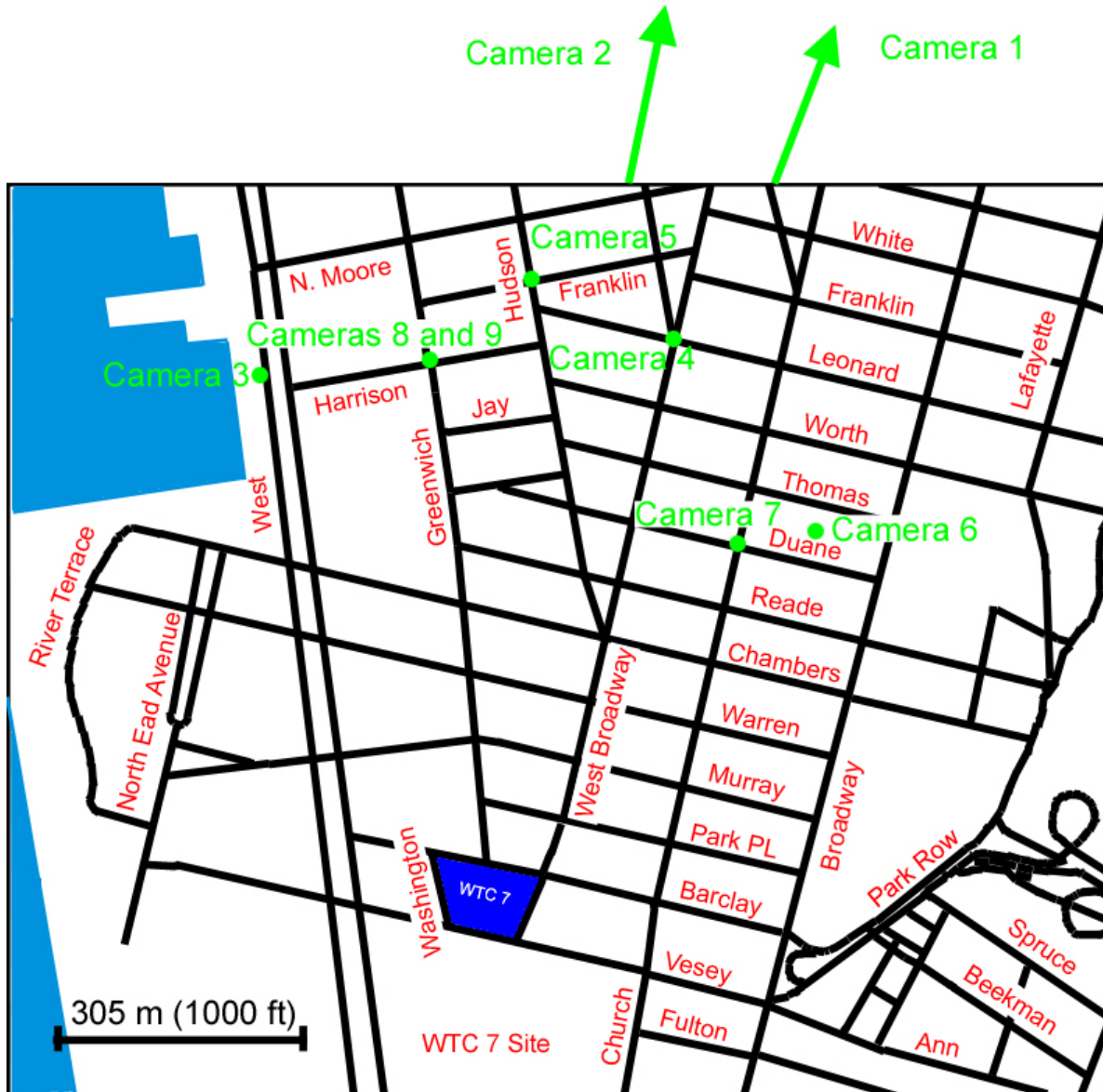
Camera No.	Location	Coverage	Notes
1	High on building near midtown Manhattan, slightly east of normal to the north face of WTC 7	Entire collapse sequence	News camera, trained on WTC 7 for several minutes prior. Higher magnification than Camera 1
2	High on building near mid-town Manhattan, due north of WTC 7	Entire collapse sequence	News camera, trained on WTC 7 for several minutes prior. Focused less tightly on WTC 7
3	Street level, west side of West Street, near Harrison Street	Entire collapse sequence	News camera, trained on WTC 7 for several minutes prior.
4	Street level, near the corner of West Broadway and Leonard Street	Began after descent of east penthouse	Hand-held news camera, was not operating when east penthouse descended.
5	Street level, near the corner of Franklin and Hudson Streets	Began after descent of east penthouse	Amateur recording
6	An elevated apartment on the northeast corner of Church and Duane Streets	Began after descent of east penthouse	Figure 5–152, Figure 5–157, and Figure 5–158 are frames from clips shot earlier from the same location.
7	Street level, near the corner of Church and Duane Streets	Began after descent of east penthouse	Provided by news organization.
8	Street level, near the corner of Greenwich and Jay Streets	Began after descent of east penthouse	News camera.
9	Street level, near the corner of Greenwich and Jay Streets	Began after descent of east penthouse	News camera

The videos were used to derive a timeline for the collapse. Note that none of the video clips provide unobstructed views of the lower floors of WTC 7.

Figure 5–184, Figure 5–185, and Figure 5–186 show frames taken from Cameras 1, 2, and 3, respectively, just prior to the time when the east penthouse began to descend into the building. The earliest frames available from the six additional video clips are shown in Figure 5–187 through Figure 5–192.

### 5.7.2 Descent of the East Penthouse

The first detectable indication of the WTC 7 east penthouse collapse was a downward movement of the eastern side of its roofline. As the downward motion developed, it quickly involved the entire penthouse and became most rapid 42 percent of the way across the roofline from the east. It appeared as if the penthouse almost immediately began to break into two separate sections along a north-south line, and the penthouse then began to “fold” into the main roof from either edge. Figure 5–193 through Figure 5–197 show a 3.5 s sequence of the descent as viewed from the Camera 2 and Camera 3 positions.



**Figure 5–183. Locations of the nine video cameras used to analyze the WTC 7 collapse are shown relative to the location of WTC 7.**

The arrows indicate the directions of Camera 1 and Camera 2 relative to WTC 7. They were located approximately 5 km to 7 km (3 miles to 4 miles) from WTC 7.



**Figure 5–184.** Frame from the Camera 1 video, showing the north face of WTC 7 (on right) seconds before the east penthouse began to fall into the building.

**Figure 5–185.** Frame from the Camera 2 video, showing the north face of WTC 7 (just right of center) seconds before the east penthouse began to fall into the building. The intensity levels were adjusted.



**Figure 5–186.** Frame from the Camera 3 video showing the north face of WTC 7 (in center) seconds before the east penthouse began to fall into the building.

The intensity levels were adjusted and floor numbers have been added.



**Figure 5–187. Earliest frame from the Camera 4 video, showing the north face of WTC 7.**

It was shot  $3.7 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to sink into the building. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

**Figure 5–188. Earliest frame from the Camera 5 video, showing the north face of WTC 7.**

It was shot  $6.1 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to sink into the building.



**Figure 5–189. Earliest frame from the Camera 6 video, showing the north face of WTC 7.**

It was shot  $7.2 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to sink into the building. The intensity levels have been adjusted.



Source: Unknown



**Figure 5-190. Earliest frame from the Camera 7 video, showing the north face of WTC 7.**

It was shot  $7.7 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to sink into the building. The intensity levels have been adjusted.

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**Figure 5-191. Earliest frame from the Camera 8 video, showing the north face of WTC 7.**

It was shot  $8.8 \text{ s} \pm .2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to sink into the building. The intensities were adjusted.



**Figure 5-192. Earliest frame from the Camera 9 video, showing the north face of WTC 7.**

It was shot  $9.4 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to sink into the building. The intensities were adjusted.



**Figure 5–193. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip and the Camera 3 video clip, showing the north face of WTC 7  $1.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward.**  
The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–194. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip and the Camera 3 video clip, showing the north face of WTC 7  $1.3 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward.**  
The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–195. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip and the Camera 3 video clip, showing the north face of WTC 7  $1.7 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–196. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip and the Camera 3 video clip, showing the north face of WTC 7  $2.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.





**Figure 5-197. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip and the Camera 3 video clip, showing the north face of WTC 7  $3.5 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.

Figure 5-193 shows the appearance of the east penthouse 1.0 s after it began to descend. A photograph recorded at roughly the same time is included in Figure 5-1. The east-west location where the penthouse split was estimated to be 42 percent of the way across the penthouse roofline using the Camera 2 video. A similar result was obtained from the photograph in Figure 5-1. This location lies close to the vertical line of windows on the north face numbered 44B.

From the two perspectives shown in Figure 5-193, the entire lengths of the east and west walls of the east penthouse began to rotate downward into an apparent opening in the roof of WTC 7. The west wall of the penthouse pulled away from the north and south screenwalls that connected the east and west penthouses as it rotated counterclockwise.

Comparison of the Camera 3 frame in Figure 5-193 with the earlier frame in Figure 5-186 reveals some subtle changes in the appearance of the north face of WTC 7. On the 40<sup>th</sup> floor, it appears that two glass panes have broken out of windows 40-44B and 40-44D. In the video, window 40-44B began to break 0.6 s after the penthouse began to move downward, followed by window 40-44D 0.1 s later. On the 45<sup>th</sup> floor, two brighter areas have appeared near windows 45-43D and 45-46A even though the window glass appears to be intact. These brighter areas developed nearly simultaneously with the downward movement of the penthouse roof. The changes in appearance are due to local variations in the light reflected from the façade, suggesting local distortions of the façade at these locations. Although faint, similar light variations are evident along a line running vertically near windows 43D and extending over the visible portion of the face from the 37<sup>th</sup> to 45<sup>th</sup> floors.

Figure 5-194 shows two frames from the same video clips, recorded 0.33 s later than those in Figure 5-193. The east penthouse has continued moving downward into the building. The Camera 3 video shows that the northeast corner of the penthouse was falling faster than the other three corners. In the Camera 3 view in Figure 5-194, a small section of the northeast corner, which appears to be black in the frame, is about

to disappear below the upper edge of the building façade, while another part of the eastern section, which appears to be much higher, is visible further toward the center of the roof. The difference in heights is even larger than it appears, since the southern edge of the penthouse is considerably further away from the camera location. From the more distant Camera 2 view in Figure 5–194, it is clear that the eastern and western sections of the east penthouse have fully separated. In this view, the roofline of the eastern section appears to be parallel to the main roof, even though it lies well below the upper end of the western section and its original location (compare with Figure 5–185). Since the northern part of the eastern section is about to fully disappear into the roof, this observation suggests that the southern part is actually collapsing by rotating as a single unit toward the north, indicating that the eastern section of the penthouse had broken into at least two pieces.

A large fraction of the west wall of the east penthouse is rotating towards the east in the closer view from Camera 3 and appears to be intact. The appearance of this area in the Camera 2 view in Figure 5–194 is consistent with this interpretation.

The appearance of the north face recorded by Camera 3 in Figure 5–194 has changed somewhat over the 0.33 s since the frame in Figure 5–193 was taken. An additional window on the 40<sup>th</sup> floor, 40-43E, has opened. The bright spot on the 45<sup>th</sup> floor near column 44 is still prominent, but the one near column 46 has become much less distinct. The vertical line near column 44 is no longer evident. In the Camera 2 view, a faint lighter area is visible near the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> floors below the collapsing penthouse. This lighter area appeared as the penthouse began to sink into the roof and seems to be associated with changes in reflected light from the face at this location.

The two views of the collapsing penthouse 10 frames later (1.7 s after it began to descend) are shown in Figure 5–195. From the long distance Camera 2 view, it is clear that the eastern portion of the penthouse has disappeared completely below the parapet running around the building and has presumably fallen into the building, while the western half is still visible and continues to rotate into the opening. In the view from West Street (Camera 3), it appears as if the west wall of the east penthouse is still intact.

In the closer view, an additional window (40-45A) on the 40<sup>th</sup> floor has opened. The bright spot near column 43 is still prominent on the 45<sup>th</sup> floor. A light area has appeared near the tops of the windows on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors below the collapsing penthouse. In the longer distance view, the lighter area on the north face below the collapsing penthouse has extended further down the face to the 41<sup>st</sup> floor.

The videos show that it took  $2.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  for the entire east penthouse to disappear from view. The last portion to disappear was the southwest corner. There is a small uncertainty in the timing because a small section of the north screenwall near the penthouse began to break away at  $1.9 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  and rotated counterclockwise toward the collapsing penthouse. As it rotated, it blocked the view of the last section of the penthouse to disappear. Figure 5–196 shows the two views of WTC 7 taken  $2.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.1$  after the penthouse began to move downward. The small black object visible at the right side of the location where the penthouse had been is the section of the collapsing screenwall. The penthouse itself is no longer visible.

Except for the missing penthouse and broken windows, the north face of WTC 7 in the Camera 3 view from West Street is little changed from Figure 5–186. In the more distant view, the area of increased light reflection on the north face has continued to move downward.

### 5.7.3 Distortion of the North Façade

After the east penthouse and a small section of the north screenwall disappeared, there was a short period during which structural changes were not apparent in the videos. Figure 5–197 shows two views of the north face of the building 3.5 s after the east penthouse began to move downward and 1.5 s later than Figure 5–196. In the close view, a number of windows have opened on the 40<sup>th</sup> through 45<sup>th</sup> floors between columns 43 and 45. A bright area is evident in the windows on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors. This bright area appeared as the east penthouse disappeared into the building, likely due to sunlight shining onto the windows through the opening created in the roof of WTC 7 by the collapsing penthouse. The same bright area near the top of WTC 7 is evident in the long distance view in Figure 5–197.

In this same frame, a faint tear-drop-shaped brighter area is also apparent, spread over multiple floors on the eastern side of the north face. This area extends downward to near the 33<sup>rd</sup> floor. When this video clip was scrubbed (played back and forth at varying rates), it was possible to observe this lighter area moving downward on the face following the penthouse descent. It appeared near the top of the building at the same time the east penthouse disappeared into the building (Figure 5–194 through Figure 5–196) and moved downward in a single continuous motion, disappearing from view behind the building in the foreground, roughly 5 s after the penthouse began to descend. The same motion could be seen in the Camera 1 video clip from which the more distant view shown in Figure 5–184 was taken.

Since the majority of the window glass in the area of the movement was still intact, it is probable that the lighter area was the result of changing light reflections due to distortions of the façade, similar to those discussed earlier. Such distortions could be due to physical movement of the face or perhaps to pressure changes within the building. Whatever the cause, it seems clear that some type of disturbance began to move downward in the building at the same time as the east penthouse started descending.

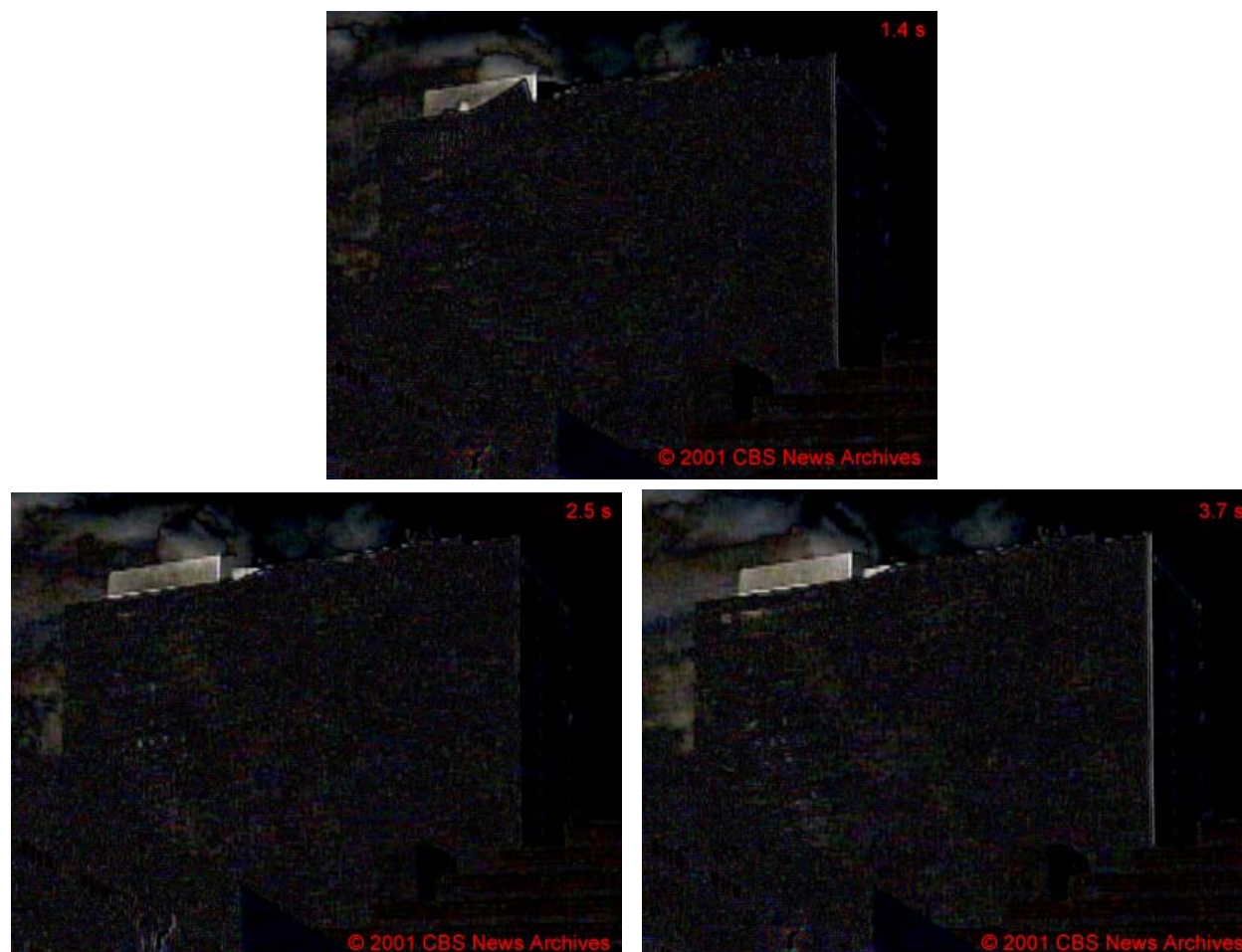
Just prior to the time that Figure 5–196 was taken (at  $3.5 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$ ), an additional failure was observed on the roof of WTC 7 in the Camera 2 video clip. A relatively small piece of screenwall or mechanical equipment in the vicinity of the east end of the screenwalls began to move and appeared to rotate downward toward the south or west. It disappeared from view in about 2 s.

When the Camera 2 video clip was scrubbed, it could be seen that the entire building moved as the east penthouse began to sink into WTC 7. This motion was most evident along the northwest corner. At first, there was a relatively small motion toward the west, followed by a larger movement toward the east. These motions were more easily identified by creating difference frames in which a single frame recorded prior to the start of the east penthouse movement was subtracted from each frame in the clip. Figure 5–198 includes three frames taken from such a difference video, with times following the start of downward motion for the east penthouse indicated. The variations in the brightness of the line along the northwest corner reveal that lateral motions were taking place. Details concerning these motions are provided in Appendix C, where a more sophisticated analysis is used to quantify the building movements. Note that other observations discussed previously, such as the appearance of broken windows and light coming through the upper windows at the top of the building, can be discerned in the difference frames.

Figure 5–187 was recorded 0.2 s after the images shown in Figure 5–197 and 3.7 s after the east penthouse began to move downward, looking down West Broadway. Much of the north face is visible for the 25<sup>th</sup> floor and higher. Roughly seven additional lower floors are visible at the northeast corner. Some

details concerning the north face can be gleaned from the image. For instance, the light coming through windows on the east side of the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors can be seen.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of Figure 5–187 is the flow of what appears to be dark smoke across the visible part of the northeast corner as high as the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor. The actual composition of the material is not known. It could have been smoke from the fires on lower floors and/or escaping dust generated within the building by ongoing structural changes. Later during the WTC 7 collapse, a debris flow similar to those generated by the collapses of the towers (see Figure 5–27, Figure 5–34, Figure 5–35, and Figure 5–42) formed due to the dust released by the collapse. Due to the shadowing of the area, the dust cloud had a very similar appearance to the dark flow in Figure 5–187. The flow in Figure 5–187 appears to extend out to and across West Broadway and perhaps even somewhat north along this street.



**Figure 5–198. Three cropped difference frames based on the Camera 3 video clip shown in Figure 5–186 created by subtracting a frame from before the east penthouse started downward from each frame in the clip.**

The indicated times are the periods since the east penthouse began to move.

The intensity levels were adjusted.

Figure 5–199 shows the north face 5.0 s after the east penthouse began moving downward. These two frames were taken from the Camera 2 long distance and Camera 3 West Street views. The time is 1.5 s after the corresponding views shown in Figure 5–197. There have been relatively minor changes in the appearance of the north face over this period. In the Camera 3 shot, it can be seen that additional glass has broken out of windows on the east side of the face. Open windows are visible at multiple locations from the 37<sup>th</sup> floor to the 43<sup>rd</sup> floor. The light coming through the open roof is apparent for windows on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors. In the longer distance view, the top of the tear-drop shaped light area that was observed moving down the north face is just visible above the buildings in the foreground. Most of the shape has already moved out of view. No other major visible changes were evident over the 1.5 s period.



**Figure 5–199. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip in Figure 5–185 and the Camera 3 video clip in Figure 5–186, showing the north face of WTC 7 5.0 s  $\pm$  0.1 s after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.

#### 5.7.4 Global Collapse of WTC 7

The global collapse of WTC 7 started 6.9 s  $\pm$  0.1 s after the east penthouse began its descent into the building. Thus, the actual time when the east penthouse first began to descend into the roof of WTC 7 was 5:20:45 p.m.  $\pm$  1 s. The initial movement of the north face occurred at the roofline at the east penthouse location and at the eastern side of the screenwalls on the roof. The most rapid initial descent was near the screenwall, and this structure appeared to be sinking into the building.

Figure 5–200 shows views of the north face shot by Cameras 2 and 3 at 0.6 s after this motion was first detectable. Comparison of the Camera 3 shot with the corresponding view in Figure 5–199 shows that the top of the north screenwall has moved downward on the east side. This is most easily seen by noting the variation in the height of the screenwall above the top of the north face parapet. In the more distant Camera 2 shot, the line running along the top of the north screenwall and the west penthouse appears to be slanted downward toward the east.

A better idea of the motion can be obtained from Figure 5–201, which shows the result of subtracting the Camera 3 clip in Figure 5–199 from that shown in Figure 5–200. The white area along the top of the building is due to the building movement between the two frames. The largest change is along the eastern edge of the screenwall. There is a decided narrowing of the white band further west indicating that the eastern side of the line formed by the screenwall and west penthouse has descended further. Substantial movement of the building's upper edge is evident to the east of the screenwall. Interestingly, little movement of the northeast and northwest corners of the building is indicated.

Comparison of the Camera 3 frames in Figure 5–199 and Figure 5–200 shows that changes in the appearance of the visible upper floors of the north face were minimal during the 2.5 s between the frames. In particular, the number of broken windows appears to be unchanged.

Figure 5–188 shows a north face view of WTC 7 that was recorded by Camera 5 just prior to the initiation of the global collapse of the building. The east penthouse is no longer present on the roof, while the screenwall and west penthouse are still in place. This view provides little additional information concerning the state of the building. On the other hand, Figure 5–189 was taken by Camera 6 a few tenths of a second after the global collapse started and before the images in Figure 5–200 were taken. It provides a view of the center of the north face, down to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor. Heavy smoke and/or dust are visible flowing across portions of the north face. The smoke and/or dust nearly reach to the 25<sup>th</sup> floor at the northeast corner. It is likely that this flow is a continuation of the heavy smoke and/or dust flow first observed in Figure 5–187, i.e., prior to the initiation of apparent global collapse.



**Figure 5–200. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip in Figure 5–185 and the Camera 3 video clip in Figure 5–186, showing the north face of WTC 7 7.5 s  $\pm$  0.1 s after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–201. Cropped difference frame at  $7.5 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move, created by subtracting the frame reproduced in Figure 5–199 from the Camera 3 video clip shown in Figure 5–200.**

The intensity levels were adjusted.

Review of the Camera 3 video clip showed that the top of the screenwall and west penthouse rapidly disappeared from view behind the north parapet from east to west. The last section was seen  $8.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  following the initial movement of the east penthouse. Note that this does not mean these structures had sunk completely through the roof, since they were set well back from the north face, and only their tops were visible over the parapet. At nearly the same time that the penthouse was lost from the Camera 3 view, multiple windows opened nearly simultaneously on several floors on the west side of the north face near column 55. Shortly thereafter, in the long distance Camera 2 video, a relatively small object could be seen falling rapidly away from the east end of the screenwall starting at  $8.3 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began moving down. It is likely that this object was part of the south screenwall that fell into the opening in the roof to the east.

Figure 5–202 shows Camera 2 distant and Camera 3 West Street views of the north face at  $8.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began falling. In the closer view the west penthouse is no longer visible. The windows that opened  $0.2 \text{ s}$  earlier on the west side of the face near column 55 extend over the 33<sup>rd</sup> to 39<sup>th</sup> floors in the West Street image. The distribution of open windows on the east side of the face appears to be unchanged from that in Figure 5–200.

Direct comparison of Figure 5–200 and Figure 5–202 shows that WTC 7 moved downward during the  $0.6 \text{ s}$  period between the images. It also appears that the east end of the north face is rotating to the north relative to the rest of the north face.

It is clear from the distant view in Figure 5–202 that, even though the screenwall and west penthouse have partially sunk into the building, they are still well above the roof and parapet. Close inspection of this image reveals a darker area at the eastern end of the sloping line formed by the screenwall and the west penthouse on the roof. This dark area is the falling object that is about to disappear into the building. On the east side there is a white cloud rising above the roofline. Later frames reveal that this is a dust cloud that is being pushed upward from the opening in the roof as the building collapses.



**Figure 5–202. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip in Figure 5–185 and the Camera 3 video clip in Figure 5–186, showing the north face of WTC 7 8.1 s  $\pm$  0.1 s after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.

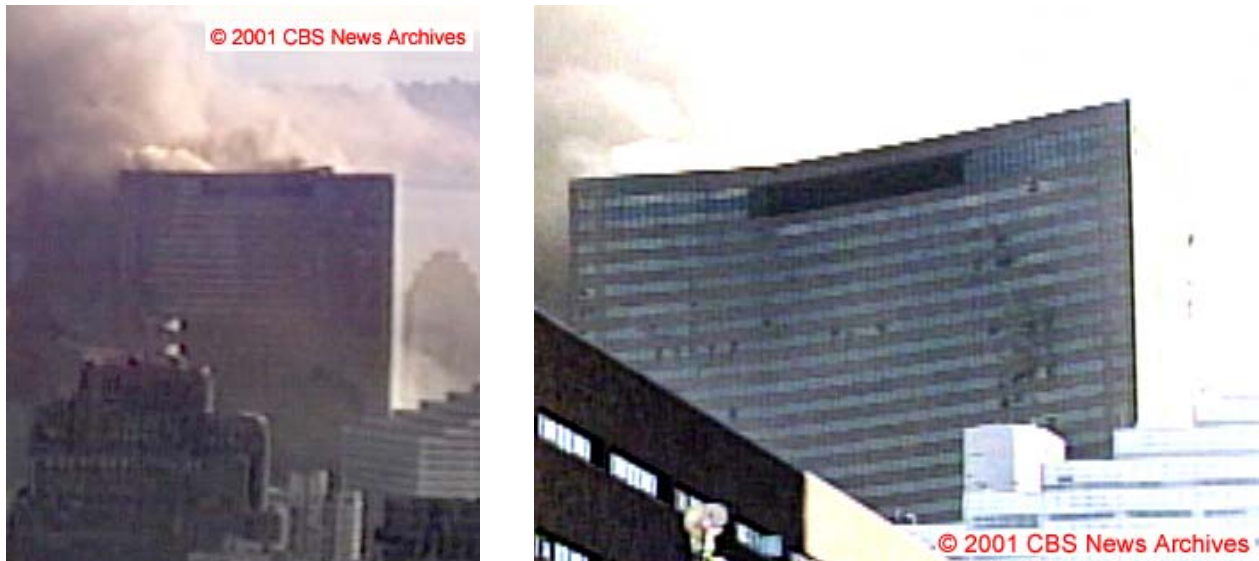
Camera 2 and Camera 3 views of the north face of WTC 7 recorded 0.9 s after those in Figure 5–202, i.e., 9.0 s after the east penthouse began to move, are shown in Figure 5–203. By this time, the entire north face that is visible above the foreground buildings was clearly falling as a unit. By counting the visible floors above the foreground building in the view from West Street, it was found that WTC 7 had fallen nearly two stories in the 2.1 s since the global collapse started. The façade damage on the west side of the face has increased and seems to extend over most of the visible floors between columns 54 and 55. What appears to be dust has begun to flow from the open windows. A few additional windows have opened near the center of the face since the frame in Figure 5–202 was taken. The distribution of open east-side windows looks similar at the two times. The rotation of the east edge of the north face has become more evident, and a distinct kink has begun to develop just to the left of the east end of the louvers on the 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> floors. This location is close to perimeter column 47.

In the distant view in Figure 5–203 it can be seen that all of the screenwall and most of the west penthouse have disappeared below the north parapet. The roofline of the west penthouse that is still visible is sloping down steeply from its western edge. The dust cloud rising through the roof opening on the east side of the building has grown.

By utilizing video clips from the Camera 3 and Camera 4 videos it was possible to characterize the motions of the northeast and northwest edges of WTC 7 in more detail. A sequence of images from the Camera 4 video is shown in Figure 5–204. This camera was hand held, and during the collapse the camera moved and the operator began to zoom in. As a result, the line corresponding to the pre-collapse location of the northeast edge of WTC 7 moved within the video frames with time. However, the two buildings in the foreground were fixed and provided a means to identify this location in frames after the collapse began. In the first image of Figure 5–204, a vertical line has been drawn tracing the northeast edge of WTC 7, and a horizontal line was drawn to the two buildings in the foreground. Using the foreground building edges as guides, these same lines were imposed on subsequent frames, in effect



identifying the original location of the northeast edge in the frame. Onto each subsequent image, the same lines have been added that trace the evolving location of the northeast edge of the building. In the first five frames the original line and the edge of WTC 7 at the later time coincide within the resolution of the image, showing that the visible northeast edge had not moved perpendicular to a line running between the camera position and the edge of the building. During this time, WTC 7 had begun to collapse, and the roofline had already descended about 10 stories. Thus, well into the building collapse, the northeast corner of the building fell either straight down, directly toward, or directly away from the video camera. In the next frame at 10.6 s following initial movement of the east penthouse, the top of the northeast corner of the building has tilted sharply to the west, and it appears that the building has begun to break apart. This motion continued to grow until the northeast edge became hidden by the rising dust cloud.



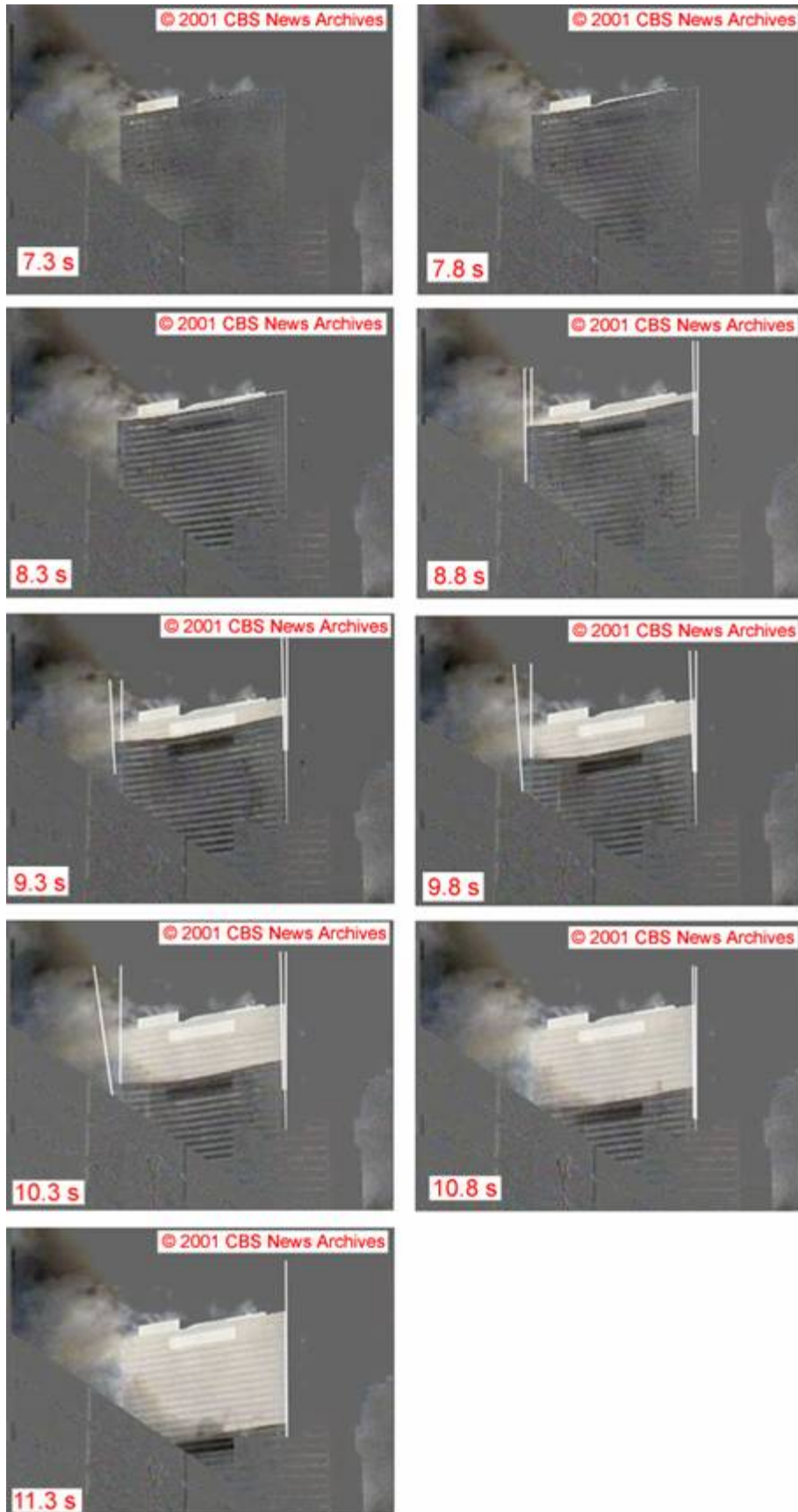
**Figure 5–203. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip in Figure 5–185 and the Camera 3 video clip in Figure 5–186, showing the north face of WTC 7 9.0 s  $\pm$  0.1 s after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.

The Camera 3 video provided additional information about the movement of the building edges due to its view of the full width of WTC 7 and a more oblique viewing angle. The image differencing technique used to visualize the movement of WTC 7 in Section 5.7.3 was again applied. Figure 5–205 shows several frames from the difference video at the indicated times following initiation of downward movement of the east penthouse. White lines denoting both the original and displaced edges of the building are drawn on the image to emphasize the relative displacement and rotation. In this sequence of images, both the northeast and northwest edges began to tilt toward the north shortly after the building began to move downward. The northeast edge tilt continued to increase until the edge was obscured by dust and smoke. The northwest edge initially tilted in a similar manner, but then settled back to its original line and fell nearly vertically (or directly toward or away from the camera).



Figure 5–204. Images from the Camera 4 video clip showing relative movement of the northeast edge of WTC 7 during its global collapse.



**Figure 5–205.** Difference images from the Camera 3 video clip showing the rotation of the northeast edge of WTC 7 during the global collapse.

Times are referenced to the time the east penthouse began to descend into the building.

The extent of the northeast edge motion was estimated using the Camera 3 video frame in Figure 5–206, at which time the top of the building had descended about seven stories. The two red lines on the right trace the west roofline and the southwest edge of WTC 7. The red line at the left is parallel to the west roofline and passes through the top of the northeast corner of the descending roofline. A geometric calculation was performed, involving the angle between these two lines, the dimensions of the building, the distance between the camera and the building, and the viewing angles of the northeast and southwest corners. The calculation led to an estimate that, at this point in the collapse, the top of the northeast corner roofline was displaced  $11 \text{ m} \pm 3 \text{ m}$  from its original footprint. In combination with observations from Figure 5–204, it is possible to determine that the motion was primarily due north.



**Figure 5–206. Heavily processed difference frame from the camera 3 video, used to estimate the lateral distance the northeast corner of WTC 7 moved from its original footprint during the collapse.**

It was recorded 10.3 s after the east penthouse began to move down.

The Camera 6 videographer, who shot the clip from which Figure 5–189 was taken, zoomed in on the north face of WTC 7 as it collapsed. Figure 5–207 shows a frame taken from this clip at about the same time ( $\pm 0.2$  s) that the frames in Figure 5–203 were recorded. In this image, there appears to be both smoke (black) and dust (white) flowing across the north face just above the building in the foreground. Most of the material appears to be dust. It is possible to make out the window damage on the west side of the face between columns 54 and 55. This damage extends at least as far down as the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor. Only a few open windows are visible on the east side of the face.



**Figure 5–207. Frame from the Camera 6 video clip in Figure 5–189, showing the north face of WTC 7  $9.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.

Figure 5–191 and Figure 5–192 showed views of the north face of WTC 7 taken looking up Greenwich Street that were recorded just prior to and just after those shown in Figure 5–203 and Figure 5–207, respectively. The dust cloud is prominent in both images. It appears to extend down close to the ground. Figure 5–192 is the clearer of the two images. The damage on the west side of the north face between columns 54 and 55 is discernible along with open windows on the east face. Streams of dust have appeared from several windows near column 45.

During the period between 9.0 s and 10.0 s after the east penthouse began to descend, the north face fell downward slightly more than four stories. Camera 2 and Camera 3 views, recorded 10.0 s following the start of downward movement for the east penthouse, are shown in Figure 5–208. The West Street view shows a large amount of dust flowing from open windows on the face. This dust first appeared around

9.2 s after the east penthouse started moving. The kink near column 47 is still prominent. The dust plume being forced from the roof opening on the east side of the building is visible. In the distant view, the entire west penthouse has disappeared below the north wall parapet. This took place around 9.3 s. A dust cloud, similar to that being ejected from the opening in the roof on the east side, has begun to form just to the west of the center of the north face. This suggests that the roof has also opened at this location.



**Figure 5–208. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip in Figure 5–185 and the Camera 3 video clip in Figure 5–186, showing the north face of WTC 7 10.0 s  $\pm$  0.1 s after the east penthouse began to move downward.**

The intensities have been adjusted.

Figure 5–209 shows a frame from Camera 6 of the north face of WTC 7 recorded 10.0 s after the east penthouse began to collapse. Dust trails are flowing from the open windows on the east and west sides of the building. Numerous windows are open near the center of the face, but no dust flows are evident from these windows. The kink in the face near column 47 observed near the top of building in Figure 5–208 appears to extend at least as far down as the mechanical floors on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> floors.

Figure 5–210 is a frame from the Camera 9 video showing the collapse at the same time looking up Greenwich Street. The appearance of the collapsing north face is consistent with the descriptions above. The appearance of the dust cloud at the base of the building has not changed markedly from that seen in Figure 5–192.

During the next second, the north face of WTC 7 moved downward nearly 6 stories. Figure 5–211 shows the Camera 2 distant and Camera 3 West Street views at 11.0 s following the initial downward movement of the east penthouse. WTC 7 is just about to pass out of sight behind the foreground building in the West Street view. While dust clouds continue to pass over the face, it is remarkable how many windows are still intact at the top of the building. The amount of dust pouring from the open windows of the falling north face is more evident in the distant view. It is also clear that a large amount of dust has been ejected through the roof at the two locations on the east side and near the center.



**Figure 5–209.** Frame from the Camera 6 video clip in Figure 5–189, showing the north face of WTC 7  $10.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to descend. The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–210.** Frame from the Camera 9 video clip in Figure 5–192, showing the north face of WTC 7  $10.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward. The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–211. Cropped frames from the Camera 2 video clip in Figure 5–185 and the Camera 3 video clip in Figure 5–186, showing the north face of WTC 7  $11.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.1 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward. The intensities have been adjusted.**



**Figure 5–212. Frame from the Camera 6 video clip in Figure 5–189, showing the north face of WTC 7  $11.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward. The intensities have been adjusted.**



Figure 5–212 and Figure 5–213 show frames from the northeast (Camera 6) and Greenwich Street (Camera 9) video clips for the same time as the images in Figure 5–211. In both frames, the distortions of the falling building stand out. The kink near column 47 is prominent in Figure 5–213, while in Figure 5–212, a strong distortion is present near the east edge of the north face. Both frames also show the large amount of dust being pushed out of open windows higher up in the building and the huge dust clouds forming near its base. In Figure 5–212, large amounts of dust have been pushed from near the base of the building on the east, north, and west sides. A prominent feature in Figure 5–213 is the large pulses of dust flowing upward through the roof on the east side and near the center.



**Figure 5–213.** Frame from the Camera 9 video clip in Figure 5–192 shows the north face of WTC 7  $11.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward.

The intensities have been adjusted.

Between 11 s and 12 s following the initial movement of the east penthouse, WTC 7 fell an additional eight stories. By 12 s, there is clear evidence that the collapsing building is breaking apart. Figure 5–214 shows the northeast Camera 6 view of the north face 12 s after the east penthouse began to move. Several sections of the parapet on the west side of the building are missing and light is streaming through the openings. The building appears to be breaking apart on the west side of the north face. A large amount of dust and debris is coming from this area. The Camera 9 view of the building from Greenwich Street at the same time is shown in Figure 5–215. A section of the northeast corner of WTC 7 (indicated by an arrow) is visible well above the remaining roofline for the building. As suggested by the image in Figure 5–212, this corner apparently separated from the remainder of the building and collapsed at a different rate.

Figure 5–216 shows a frame taken from the Camera 6 video shot looking at WTC 7 from the northeast. It was recorded 13 s following the initiation of east penthouse movement. The remainder of WTC 7 is just about to disappear into the dust cloud. Shortly after most of the building disappeared into the dust cloud, a piece of debris several stories tall appeared from the east side (where it had been hidden by the dust cloud) and fell toward the center of the building. This section of WTC 7 may have come from the northeast corner which had earlier separated from the remainder of the building.



**Figure 5–214. Frame from the Camera 6 video clip in Figure 5–189, showing the north face of WTC 7 12.0 s  $\pm$  0.2 s after the east penthouse began to move downward. The intensities have been adjusted.**

When WTC 7 collapsed, the dust that was generated mixed with air to create a dense mixture that flowed away from the site. The resulting dust- and debris-laden flow spread over many blocks of lower Manhattan. Figure 5–217 and Figure 5–218 show two views of the dust cloud as it spread northward along Greenwich Street after being channeled between the taller buildings at 123 Barclay Street on the west side and 30 West Broadway and 70 Murray Street on the east side.



**Figure 5-215.** Frame from the Camera 9 video clip in Figure 5-192, showing the north face of WTC 7  $12.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward. The arrow indicates a section of the northeast corner of the building that has broken away from the main section of the building. The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5-216.** Frame from the Camera 6 video clip in Figure 5-189, showing the north face of WTC 7  $13.0 \text{ s} \pm 0.2 \text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward. The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–217.** Frame from the Camera 6 video clip in Figure 5–189, showing the dust-laden flow generated by the collapse of WTC 7,  $22.0\text{ s} \pm 0.2\text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward. The intensities have been adjusted.



**Figure 5–218.** Frame from the Camera 9 video clip in Figure 5–192, showing the dust-laden flow created by the collapse of WTC 7,  $22.0\text{ s} \pm 0.2\text{ s}$  after the east penthouse began to move downward. The intensities have been adjusted.

### 5.7.5 Audio Characteristics Based on Video Soundtracks

Three videos in the database included soundtracks that were used to investigate the audio signature associated with the period immediately prior to and during the collapse of WTC 7. All of these cameras were located at street level at least 640 m (2100 ft) from the building. Also, there were numerous other buildings between the cameras and WTC 7.

The most usable soundtrack was recorded by Camera 3, with its West Street location. This video ran for many minutes prior to and during the collapse. Even though sound was recorded by the camera, no interviews or commentary were recorded, and the microphone tended to pick up low level street sounds, such as sirens, traffic, and distant conversations. Occasionally, the camera operators located nearby were recorded at a much louder level. Since the collapse was recorded on the video, it was possible to coordinate the sound recording with the actual WTC 7 collapse.

A careful review of the audio clip did not reveal any sounds that could be associated with WTC 7 until the global collapse began. A low-level audio analysis was performed by creating a video showing the waveform for the audio signal using Aftersoftware. This video also did not reveal any features that could be associated with the collapse until after the global collapse began. In the analysis, the roughly 2 s delay in sound transmission between WTC 7 and the camera was accounted for. The amplitude of the sound signal increased while the global collapse was taking place, but there were no loud, explosive sounds when the collapse began.

The response of the camera operators provides another indication of the audio environment. Even though the east penthouse began to descend into the building 6.9 s prior to initiation of global collapse, there was no verbal response from the camera operators until 2.5 s after the global collapse began, when a loud shout of “whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa” was heard. There is no evidence that the operators heard something that attracted their attention prior to this time.

At the same time the Camera 3 video was being shot, a recorded street interview was being conducted a short distance away on West Street. In this video clip of the interview, WTC 7 is visible in the upper left hand corner of the frame. Even though the east penthouse can be seen disappearing into the building, neither the camera operator, interviewer, nor interviewee responded in any way until just over 3 s after the global collapse began. Again, there was no indication that sounds loud enough to attract attention or cause alarm were heard by people at the interview location prior to global collapse initiation.

The third video clip reviewed was a second street interview being conducted at West Broadway and Leonard Street. This camera was located near the Camera 4 location, roughly 650 m (2100 ft) from WTC 7. This clip does not show WTC 7 collapsing, but, by comparing events in the clip with those seen in the Camera 4 clip, it was possible to place the two videos on a common timeline. Review of the interview clip showed that people in the video responded to the WTC 7 collapse 1.4 s before the clip from Camera 4 started, or 1.3 s after the east penthouse began to descend into the building. Allowing 2 s for sound to reach the camera location, this is very close to the time that the east penthouse began to descend. People at this location were able to hear the collapse of the east penthouse, while observers on West Street did not hear loud noises until the global collapse started.

In the interview clip, it is possible to see dust and/or smoke being pushed across West Broadway, starting around 3 s before the East Penthouse began to descend. This suggests that structural changes inside

WTC 7 were occurring several seconds prior to the time when the east penthouse began to descend. Note that this is consistent with the seismic data discussed in Appendix B and the analysis of building motions discussed in Appendix C.

### 5.7.6 Summary

Most of the details concerning the collapse of WTC 7 are based on visual observations of the upper portions of the building. The timeline for the major events observed during the collapse shown in Table 5–3 was generated using the discussion and visual imagery presented above. Note that all times are relative to the initial downward motion of the east penthouse on the roof of WTC 7.

**Table 5–3. Timeline for major WTC 7 collapse observations**

Time(s)	Observations
- 3	Dust and/or smoke are observed being pushed across West Broadway from the east side of the building.
0	The east edge of the east penthouse starts to move downward; the east penthouse folds roughly 40 percent of the way across from the east edge; the two sections of the east penthouse appear to rotate into the roof, with the east section disappearing first.
0.6	Glass breaks in windows 40-44B and 40-44D; additional windows open on this floor over the next couple of seconds.
1.3	The northeast corner of the east penthouse disappears from view; evidence suggests that the east section of the east penthouse had broken into two additional pieces along an east-west line.
1.6	The southern part of the eastern section of the east penthouse disappears from view, appearing to rotate into roof about an east-west line.
1.9	A small section at the east end of the north screenwall detaches and falls away; it may have fallen through the opening in the roof created by the descending east penthouse.
2.0	The western section of the east penthouse disappears from view; it appears to rotate into the roof about a north-south line; a tear-drop shaped light variation covering several floors on the building façade begins to propagate downward on the north face; a bright area in the windows on the east side of the 46 <sup>th</sup> and 47 <sup>th</sup> floors is attributed to sunlight shining through the open roof.
2.0	Additional windows start to open between columns 43 and 45 on the 40 <sup>th</sup> to 45 <sup>th</sup> floors.
3.4	A small piece of debris falls away from an area at the eastern end of the screenwalls.
3.8	Earliest view of a small portion of the area at the base of WTC 7 indicates that a dust cloud has already formed.
≈ 5	The tear drop shaped light variation on the north façade moves out of sight near the 33 <sup>rd</sup> floor.
6.9	The beginning of the global collapse of WTC 7 was detected on the north face; the roofline below the east penthouse location and the eastern end of the screenwall start dropping simultaneously; the eastern end of the north wall rotates northward and a kink develops near column 47.
8.0	Windows open over multiple floors on the west side near column 55; the amount of damage grows rapidly; dust flows from open windows
8.3	A small object, likely part of the south wall, falls away from the east end of the screenwall.
8.5	The east end of the screenwall disappears behind the north face parapet.
9.2	Dust begins to flow from open windows on the east side near the top of the building.
9.3	The west penthouse disappears from view below the north face parapet.
12.0	The upper portion of the building breaks up as it collapses.
13.5	The upper portion of WTC 7 disappears into a dust cloud created by the collapse.

## 5.8 REFERENCES

Appendix L—Interim Report on WTC 7, in Progress Report on The Federal Building and Fire Safety Investigation of the World Trade Center Disaster, NIST-SP 1000-5, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD, June 2004.

McAllister, T., ed. 2002. World Trade Center Building Performance Study: Data Collection, Preliminary Observations, and Recommendations. FEMA 403. Federal Emergency Management Agency. Washington, DC, May.

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Rehm, R. G., W. M. Pitts, H. R. Baum, D. D. Evans, K. Prasad, K. B. McGrattan, G. P. Forney. 2002. Initial Model for Fires in the World Trade Center Towers, *Proceedings of the Seventh International Symposium on Fire Safety Science*, International Association for Fire Safety Science, pp. 25-40.

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## Chapter 6

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

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### 6.1 CONTEXT

Soon after the first aircraft impacted WTC 1 at 8:46:30 a.m., and before the full extent of the disaster unfolded, emergency services in New York City were functioning on the scene. Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) officers were already present performing their law enforcement duties, assisting with the evacuation, and helping the injured. By 8:50 a.m., the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) was operating at the Fire Command Desk in the lobby of WTC 1. New York Police Department (NYPD) helicopters and ground staff reached the scene by 8:52 a.m.<sup>1</sup> This early deployment is discussed in detail in NIST NCSTAR 1-8.

An additional, critical component of the New York City emergency response system, the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM), was located on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> floors of WTC 7.<sup>2</sup> The OEM office on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor contained the emergency operations post for OEM and was designed to function as the primary command center to help coordinate multi-agency operations at incidents throughout the city.<sup>2</sup> (Sheirer 2004) The OEM office consisted of a communications center and management facilities staffed by OEM personnel, liaison personnel from each of the emergency response departments, and personnel from organizations who provide support to the city's critical infrastructure. The OEM facility also had meeting rooms available for use by the Mayor, senior emergency response personnel, personnel responsible for transportation systems, and personnel who managed other infrastructure critical to city operations.

WTC 7, on the north side of Vesey Street and across from the main WTC complex, was affected by the collapses of the two towers and was included in the total emergency response at the WTC site. This chapter describes the response operations in, near, and relating to WTC 7.

### 6.2 DATA GATHERING

The Investigation Team compiled first person accounts, conducted interviews, reviewed FDNY communications recordings (including radio communications with command posts and personnel), and examined recordings of dispatcher telephone communications. In addition, FDNY documents were analyzed as they related to operations at WTC 7. For details on the data gathering processes, see NIST NCSTAR 1-8.

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<sup>1</sup> Some times listed in this chapter are based on times documented during the investigation and are written as actual times. However, these actual times are estimated to have a potential error of  $\pm 2$  min. Other times listed in this chapter are estimated based on the best evidence available and are written as "at about" or "at approximately." These times may have an error of  $\pm 8$  min, unless the potential time frame error is otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> FDNY Interview 54, winter 2004.

## **6.3 EMERGENCY RESOURCES**

### **6.3.1 FDNY**

FDNY was in control of the overall site, since the incident at the WTC site had been identified as a fire incident. In the course of the day, roughly 1,000 firefighters were on the scene, about ten times the number that might have responded to a two alarm fire. To keep track of all these, there were three magnetic Fire Command Boards, located in the lobbies of WTC 1 and WTC 2, and at the incident Command post at West Street. These Boards became overwhelmed while the WTC towers were still burning; and, with the collapse of the towers, the difficult job of knowing who was where became even more difficult.

### **6.3.2 NYPD**

There were about 50 NYPD personnel on the site. Their responsibilities were traffic control, perimeter security, security for the command posts, and building evacuation. Their primary mobilization point was at the corner of Church and Vesey streets.

### **6.3.3 PAPD**

There were a few dozen PAPD personnel on site and on orders to report to the site. As they arrived, they reported to the Fire Command Desk in the lobby of WTC 1. With the collapse of WTC 2, the Fire Command Desk was abandoned.

### **6.3.4 WTC 7 Resources**

#### **Fire Command Station**

The Fire Command Station, located at the security desk in the main lobby on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, provided a command post from which building personnel could orchestrate the response and a convening point for key building personnel responding to the emergency. The NYC Building Code requires that the computer screen in the fire command station monitor and display information regarding manual fire alarms, smoke detection, sprinkler water flow, elevator lobby smoke detectors, fire signal activation, central office notification, fan system status, fail safe locked door status, fire system trouble, fire signal trouble, tamper switch alarm, power source, test/normal mode, and other information as desired, including elevator status.

#### **Fire Safety Director**

The Fire Safety Director is a position required by Local Law 5 (New York 1973). Local Law 5 required all buildings (new or existing) occupied by more than 100 persons above or below the street level, or with more than 500 people in the entire building to have a Fire Safety Director, one or more Deputy Fire Safety Directors, and a Building Evacuation Supervisor. People in the first two categories must possess certificates of fitness from the Commissioner qualifying the individual to conduct fire drills, evacuations, and related training. A certified individual is required to be on duty during normal working hours.

Consistent with Local Law 5, the primary responsibility of the Fire Safety Director at the WTC site (according to the formal emergency procedures manual) was overall emergency management for a building incident. (Fire Safety Plan, 1998)

### **Floor Warden System**

Appendix C.2 of the WTC 7 Fire Safety Plan required each floor to designate a “responsible and dependable employee” for duty as Floor Warden to coordinate the evacuation of the floor, consistent with the NYC Building Code. Assisting the Floor Warden were Deputy Floor Wardens (one Deputy Floor Warden per 700 m<sup>2</sup>, 7,500 ft<sup>2</sup>) and Searchers, who constituted a tenant fire safety team. On multi-tenant floors, each tenant identified a Floor Warden for its space. The Floor Wardens were to be familiar with the Fire Safety Plan, the location of the exits, and the location and operation of the fire alarm system. Once the order to evacuate a floor was given, those with building authority had specific responsibilities to ensure an orderly evacuation:

- In the event of a fire or fire alarm, the Floor Warden was to ascertain the location of the fire and evacuate the floor in accordance with the fire safety plan.
- The Floor Warden was to determine that an alarm was transmitted.
- As soon as practicable, the Floor Warden and Deputy Floor Wardens reported the incident in detail to the Fire Command Station.
- The Floor Warden was responsible for notifying occupants of the floor that there was a fire and ensuring that the occupants executed the fire safety plan (PANYNJ 1995). In an emergency, searchers would round up employees, and the Deputy Fire Wardens would move them into the corridors and make sure all occupants were accounted for. In the event occupants were reluctant to evacuate, Searchers were not required to force evacuation.
- Floor Wardens were to select the safest stairwell to use on the basis of the location of the fire and notify the Fire Command Station which stairwell was utilized.

## **6.4 ACTIVITY AT WTC 7 FROM 8:46 A.M. TO 10:30 A.M. EDT**

At 8:46 a.m., the aircraft impact on the north side of WTC 1 showered debris onto the adjacent buildings and streets below. As a result of this impact, the electrical power went out for several seconds inside WTC 7.<sup>2</sup> After learning of the situation at WTC 1, many occupants of WTC 7 immediately began leaving their building (Chapter 7). The OEM operations center also began receiving calls related to the emergency.<sup>2</sup>

At 9:03 a.m., a building engineer in a hallway on the 44<sup>th</sup> floor heard glass breaking when the second aircraft struck WTC 2.<sup>3</sup> Another interviewee stated that the second aircraft impact further indicated the possibility of a threat to WTC 7, and it quickly led to the first order to evacuate the building.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> SSB Interview 1, January 2004.

<sup>4</sup> WTC 7 Interview 1110402, fall 2002.

Shortly after WTC 2 was struck, there were numerous small fires outside WTC 7 at the street level. A firefighter entered WTC 7 from "the Washington Street and Vesey Street sides," connected a hose line onto the "A" stairwell sprinkler riser, located on the west side of the building, and started the engine's pump.<sup>5</sup>

At 9:16 a.m., NYPD officers from Manhattan South began to establish a security perimeter extending two city blocks around the WTC site.<sup>6</sup> This security perimeter contained WTC 7.

At 9:30 a.m., the FDNY Emergency Medical Service (EMS) established a Division at WTC 7 for assisting victims.<sup>7</sup> An EMS triage center was established in the lobby of WTC 7 as occupants from WTC 1 and WTC 6 evacuated through WTC 7.<sup>8</sup> In addition, at about 9:30 a.m., the building engineer mentioned above went up to the penthouse of WTC 7 to get supplies for the triage center. He reported that all mechanical and electrical equipment was operating, and that the building's air dampers were closed to control dust intake. As the evacuation continued, he had other building staff members check the tenant floors to make sure everyone was out of the building.<sup>3</sup>

At approximately 9:32 a.m., after a report of a third aircraft heading into the city, a second order was given in the OEM office to evacuate the WTC 7 facility.<sup>9</sup> A number of personnel stayed in the OEM office and continued to work. Again, at approximately 9:44 a.m., following the news that the Pentagon had been attacked, a Deputy OEM Commissioner verbally ordered the complete evacuation of WTC 7. (Sheirer 2004) This order included the evacuation of the OEM operations center on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor. Before evacuating, OEM assigned personnel to work with each of the emergency responder command posts. Though this action reduced the impact of the loss of the OEM office, the loss did create difficulties related to the coordination of emergency responder operations and resources.<sup>8</sup> As an example, shortly after WTC 7 was evacuated, the FDNY Fire Commissioner arrived, looking for the Mayor, who he believed to be at the OEM center on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor. A guard met the Commissioner in the lobby and ordered him and his staff out of the building. The guard told him, "This building has been evacuated," and "OEM, the mayor, they're all gone." (Von Essen 2002)

At 9:45 a.m. the NYPD Command and Control Center at One Police Plaza was activated.<sup>6</sup>

At 9:59 a.m., the triage center located in the lobby of WTC 7 was expanded. Operations were being set up on the loading dock of WTC 7 when WTC 2 collapsed.<sup>3</sup>

When WTC 2 collapsed at 9:59 a.m., light debris from the collapse struck the south face of WTC 7 (Chapter 5).<sup>8</sup> This collapse caused the emergency battery-powered lighting to come on inside WTC 7. In addition, the emergency AC power generators began operating. The building engineer went up to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor cafeteria. When he opened the east emergency exit door, he saw what he described as heavy smoke and dust, and there was a reddish glow from above. He also mentioned smelling fuel oil and feeling heat.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> WTC 7 Interview 2110402, fall 2002.

<sup>6</sup> McKinsey & Company, *Improving NYPD Emergency Preparedness and Response*, New York, August 2002.

<sup>7</sup> McKinsey & Company, *Increasing FDNY's Preparedness*, New York, August 2002.

<sup>8</sup> FDNY Interview 45, winter 2004.

<sup>9</sup> FDNY Bronx Master Tape 413, Side A, Channel 16, Alarm Receipt Dispatcher #4.

At approximately 10:00 a.m., a WTC 7 security manager was concerned that he might still have personnel on the 44<sup>th</sup> floor and started up the “A” (west) stairway to get his people out of the building. At 10:28 a.m., when WTC 1 collapsed, he had reached the 30<sup>th</sup> floor, and then continued up the stairway. There was rubble just before the 44<sup>th</sup> floor landing, and the stairway swayed or vibrated. Smoke or dust was swirling around. During this climb, he opened doors on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor to check for OEM staff, and the floor was full of smoke or dust. He also opened a door on the 26<sup>th</sup> floor to check for occupants and found none.

## **6.5 COLLAPSE OF THE TOWERS AND THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

With the collapse of the WTC towers, all emergency response operations at the site were disrupted. Each emergency response organization experienced significant difficulties maintaining communications and a functional command structure. For the next hour or so, activity focused on restoring operational capability and performing rescue operations.

### **6.5.1 Restoration of Command Structure and Command Posts**

All FDNY, NYPD, and PAPD command posts at the site were lost or were seriously disrupted by the collapses of the towers. (NIST NCSTAR 1-8) Officers of all emergency response organizations quickly began processes to reestablish command posts and the command structure. New command posts had to be established in safe locations and new personnel had to be assigned to take command where officers were either dead or missing. The command system of each emergency response organization was challenged during this time period as the emergency responders rebuilt the command structure. As a result, during the hour following the collapse of WTC 1, there was only a poorly defined command structure, and operations were somewhat chaotic.

With the collapse of the first tower, WTC 2, FDNY began moving its West and Vesey Streets Command Post north on West Street towards Chambers Street. This was in progress when WTC 1 collapsed.<sup>7</sup> A large dust cloud covered lower Manhattan, creating breathing difficulties for anyone in the area, and it totally obscured the view of the site for several minutes. Immediately following the collapse, emergency responders reported that there was a period where they heard no radio communications.<sup>10</sup> As the smoke began to clear, many of the emergency responders found that their radio microphones and speakers were filled with dust and debris, and these radios had to be cleaned before they were functional again.<sup>8</sup>

As command posts were being relocated, several different FDNY officers took charge of operations. By approximately 10:35 a.m., the FDNY Division 6 Chief (who was in route to the scene) assumed incident command. He went to Park Row and Vesey Streets and established a command post. Shortly following the Division 6 Chief assuming incident command, an FDNY Executive Staff person identified as C5 assumed incident command and reestablished a command post at West and Vesey Streets.<sup>7</sup> Within this same time period, a FDNY Citywide Tour Commander, designated as 4A, assumed incident command and established a command post at West and Chambers Streets.<sup>7</sup> By 11:28 a.m., a FDNY Citywide Tour Commander, designated as 4C, assumed incident command at the West and Chambers Streets Command Post.<sup>7</sup> During this same period of time, NYPD established a Command Post at 222 Broadway, the Mayor and NYPD Police Commissioner arrived at the FDNY Firehouse at Houston Street, and by 10:50 a.m., an

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<sup>10</sup> FDNY Interview 22, winter 2004.

NYPD Command Post was established on Liberty Street.<sup>6</sup> Following the collapse of WTC 2, the PAPD Police Desk that was located inside WTC 5 was abandoned.<sup>11</sup>

### 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> The PAPD reported that the collapse of WTC 1 had done significant damage to WTC 7.<sup>14</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> floor down to ground level, and debris ripped off part of the southwest corner from approximately the 8<sup>th</sup> floor up to the 18<sup>th</sup> floor.<sup>13</sup> The collapse of WTC 1 also was ascribed as responsible for starting fires inside of WTC 7.<sup>15,16</sup>

As all of the emergency responder restructuring operations were underway, three WTC 7 occupants became temporarily trapped inside the building. Two New York City employees had gone to the OEM Center on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor and found no one there.<sup>17</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 the 44<sup>th</sup> floor 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 10<sup>th</sup> floor and exited the building. The security officer had reached the 30<sup>th</sup> floor when the building shook as WTC 1 collapsed, and the stairwell became dark. He began to descend and stopped at the 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> floor, where he stopped because he could not see or breathe at this point. He

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<sup>11</sup> PA Interview 3, fall 2003.

<sup>12</sup> FDNY Interviews 30 and 31, winter 2004.

<sup>13</sup> FDNY Interview 3, winter 2004.

<sup>14</sup> PAPD Interview 1, fall 2003.

<sup>15</sup> FDNY Interview 19, winter 2004.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> WTC 7 Interviews 2041604 and 1041704, spring 2004.

broke a window near the center of the north face to yell for help. A ladder truck pulled up, but could not reach the window because of the Con Edison building extension at the lower floors. Firemen came up the stairwell right away. Soon after WTC 1 collapsed, the security officer saw a fire on the west side of Floor 7 that he attempted to put out with an extinguisher, but he was unable to do so.<sup>18</sup>

As the firefighters went up, they vented the stairway and cleared some of the smoke. They first met the security officer on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, and fire fighters escorted him down the stairs. Other fire fighters from the group continued up the stairs, shined their flashlights through the staircase smoke and called out. The two trapped men on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor saw the flashlight beams, heard the firefighters calling, and went down the stairway. The firefighters took the men outside and directed them away from the building.<sup>17</sup>

NIST was unable to find any evidence that, by approximately 11:00 a.m., any of the original occupants remained in WTC 7 (Chapter 7).

## 6.6 ACTIVITY FROM 11:02 A.M. TO APPROXIMATELY 2:30 P.M. EDT

At 11:02, the Mayor of New York City ordered the full evacuation of the city below Canal Street.<sup>6</sup> At 11:30 a.m., NYPD established an outer perimeter security zone that extended to Canal and Houston Streets.<sup>6</sup> No unauthorized individuals were allowed into lower Manhattan below Canal Street.

Between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon, approximately 40 FDNY members arrived at WTC 7 with orders to put the fires out inside WTC 7.<sup>19</sup> Inside they surveyed conditions and reported seeing small fires in debris in the core area and on the west side of the same floor of the building. They did not identify the floor where they observed this. A Chief Officer inside the building ran into other firefighters who had searched the upper floors, and they reported that no one was inside the building. When the Chief Officer reached approximately the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> floor<sup>20</sup>, he had been inside the building about 20 min to 25 min. He received a radio call from another Chief Officer outside the building ordering him out of WTC 7. The Chief Officer was ordering everyone to leave the building.<sup>19</sup> The Chief Officer left the building and went to the FDNY Command Post and reported to the Command Post Chief that he believed the fires inside WTC 7 could be extinguished. Thus, the Chief assigned with firefighting tasks was sent back to extinguish the fires. When he got back to WTC 7, he met FDNY Superior Officers and an OEM staff member who were also assessing the building's condition.<sup>19</sup>

Multiple FDNY personnel reported seeing fires in WTC 7 from the exterior, some as early as about 11:00 a.m. Fires were observed on the west face around Floor 10<sup>21</sup>, and several fires were seen higher up in the building, around the 20s and 30s.<sup>22</sup> These fires were seen from Vesey and West Street. A firefighter reported seeing fire near the center of the south face around Floor 14, which appeared to be a single office fire. Windows were broken, and smoke and fire were coming out of the building.

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<sup>18</sup> SSB Interview 5, April, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> FDNY Interview 73, summer 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Most of the FDNY personnel interviewed about conditions in WTC 7 were not familiar with the layout of the building. The floor numbers they identified as part of their observations were a best estimate of the location, but the floor location should be considered accurate to within several floors and compared to the observed fire locations in Chapter 5.

<sup>21</sup> FDNY Interview 69, spring 2004.

<sup>22</sup> OEM Interviews 4 and 16, April 2004 & July 2004.

At approximately 11:30 a.m., FDNY assigned a different Chief Officer to take charge of operations at WTC 7. He was initially given orders to put the fires out in WTC 7.<sup>23</sup> From near the Command Post at West and Vesey Streets, a Chief reported that, looking toward the building, he could not see WTC 7 because of the large smoke and dust cloud. This Chief proceeded down the street to WTC 7 to gather information on conditions. He was able to negotiate the debris fields and get to the building, where he saw the WTC 7 logo on the building's south side. There were numerous burned-out FDNY vehicles around WTC 7. Fire was observed on the south face, on a single floor around Floor 10 to Floor 14, and appeared to be traveling from west to east.<sup>21</sup> At the corner of Vesey and West Broadway, a Chief reported that a FDNY Engine was connected to a hydrant at the corner of WTC 7. Hose lines were stretched, and the engine's pump was still running even though the engine was on fire and was almost burned out. There was no water coming out of the hydrant system.<sup>13</sup> One FDNY Chief, who had been inside WTC 7, reported to him that he had opened a standpipe on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of one stairway and found no water in the standpipe system. As they were leaving the building through a service door in the southeast corner, glass was breaking from overhead. After it stopped, they exited and saw that the fires on the south face had moved to the east face and were moving north.<sup>13,21</sup> They reported that flames were coming out of the windows, and that the windows were breaking out sequentially in groups of two or three every 15 min to 20 min. The rooms appeared to have reached a flashover condition, but no heavy smoke was being pushed out of the windows. By this time, a FDNY fire boat and the retired FDNY fire boat "Harvey" were operating at the shoreline on the Hudson River near the site, and they were stretching hoses up to the WTC site. However, according to the FDNY first-person interviews, water was never an issue at WTC 7, since fire fighting was never started in the building.<sup>13</sup>

At 12:10 p.m. the Governor of New York State mobilized the State's National Guard, and by 1:30 p.m., National Guard personnel and military police (MPs) were assisting the NYPD with patrolling lower Manhattan.<sup>6</sup>

At approximately 1:00 p.m., an OEM staff member, a FDNY Deputy Chief, and a FDNY Battalion Chief entered WTC 7 to further evaluate conditions.<sup>22</sup> The OEM staff member reported that they entered WTC 7 through the door near the southeast corner on West Broadway and proceeded up the B stairway on the east side. They stopped at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor level. The atrium was filled with dust but had no significant debris. As they observed the area, they heard the building creaking. Debris was piled up on the Vesey Street side between columns 17 and 22. They checked the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors and did not see much damage from their viewing location. At the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, they moved to the A stairway and proceeded up. On the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> floor, one of the group said he saw two elevator cars ejected from their shafts and in the hallway. Looking past the elevators, they could see a gaping hole in the south face from around the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> floors. They could see one floor below and two to three floors above that location. A lot of the core walls were destroyed, and one individual reported that he saw columns hanging from the floor above. They did not observe any fires at this time on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor or 9<sup>th</sup> floor, but the interviewee reported that they could hear fires burning well above where they were standing. Also, they continued to hear creaking noises in the building.<sup>22</sup> As the FDNY Officers continued their inspection of WTC 7, they heard a loud noise, and a Chief decided that they should evacuate the building.<sup>19</sup> They also met a Deputy Chief who had just returned from inside the building, and he reported that he had conducted an inspection up to

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<sup>23</sup> FDNY Interview 3, winter 2004.



the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> floor.<sup>24</sup> He indicated that the stairway he was in was filling with smoke and that there was a lot of fire inside the building.

When a Chief Officer got to Barclay Street and West Broadway, numerous firefighters and officers were exiting WTC 7. These firefighters indicated that several blocks needed to be cleared around WTC 7 because they thought that the building was going to collapse.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there were numerous observations reported by other emergency responders who indicated that WTC 7 was considerably damaged by the collapse of WTC 1, and the potential for collapse of WTC 7 was taken seriously by these FDNY personnel. First-person interviews conducted by the news media, NIST, and FDNY communications recordings provide additional information on the building conditions, damage assessment, and emergency response operations at the scene. See the following statements:

- “There was a 10-story gash in the side of building 7. The southwest corner was taken out when Tower 1 came down.”<sup>25</sup>
- “Early on, we saw a bulge in the southwest corner between floors 10 and 13, and we had put a transit on that, and we were pretty sure she [WTC 7] was going to collapse.”<sup>26</sup>
- “...you could see the structural members, literally 10 floors, were taken out. The corners were taken out.”<sup>27</sup>
- “You could see where the north tower was and we looked back at 7 WTC, it looked like someone ripped a big gouge out of the building. It looked like a big chunk of it was torn out right here in this corner, ripped right out, the south west corner. Yes, and I remember when the dust cleared and I looked back at 7 WTC, there was a huge gouge.”<sup>28</sup>
- “We went to Vesey and Greenwich and didn’t see any damage on the north and east sides of WTC 7. When we looked on the south side of WTC 7, there had to be a hole 20 stories tall in the building, with fire on several floors.”<sup>29</sup>
- “We went out and around Building 6, down to the parking garage and to Vesey Street. We walked west. There was a 40-foot-high pile of steel in the street after Tower 1 collapsed.” “The fire had entered building 7. Fire was visible in 30 windows spread across four of the lower floors.”<sup>30</sup>

According to statements issued by Silverstein Properties<sup>31</sup>, “In the afternoon of September 11, Mr. Silverstein spoke to the Fire Department Commander on site at Seven World Trade Center. The Commander told Mr. Silverstein that there were several firefighters in the building working to contain the fires. Mr. Silverstein expressed his view that the most important thing was to protect the safety of those

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<sup>24</sup> FDNY Interview 14, winter 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Firehouse Magazine, July 2002, p. 46, Chief Mark Ferran, Battalion 12.

<sup>26</sup> Firehouse Magazine, April 2002, p. 97, Deputy Chief Peter Hayden.

<sup>27</sup> Firehouse Magazine, July 2002, p. 62, Lieutenant Pete Lund, Rescue 2.

<sup>28</sup> FDNY Interview 9, winter 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Firehouse Magazine, August 2002, pp. 90-92, Captain Chris Boyle, Engine 94.

<sup>30</sup> Firehouse Magazine, July 2002, p. 60, Lieutenant Glenn Rohan, Ladder 48.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Silverstein Properties to NIST, March 24, 2006.

firefighters, including, if necessary, to have them withdraw from the building." "With respect to Mr. Silverstein's statement, when recounting these events for a television documentary, that "I said, you know, we've had such terrible loss of life. Maybe the smartest thing to do is to pull it," (a Silverstein Properties spokesman) has said that by "it," Mr. Silverstein meant the contingent of firefighters remaining in the building."

One Battalion Chief who had come from WTC 7 indicated that his unit had searched floors 1 through 9 and found that the building was clear of people.<sup>32</sup> In the process of the search, a Battalion Chief met the building's Fire Safety Director and former Deputy Fire Safety Director on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. The Fire Safety Director reported that the building's floors had been cleared from the top down. By this time, a Chief Officer reassessed the building again and determined that fires appeared to be burning on the following floors: 6, 7, 8, 17, 21, and 30.<sup>13</sup> No accurate time is available for these actions during the WTC 7 operations; however, the sequence of events indicates that it occurred during a time period from 12:30 p.m. to approximately 2:00 p.m.

At approximately 1:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., the FDNY Chief Officer in charge of operations at WTC 7 recommended to his Commanding Officer that they should give up on efforts to save WTC 7.<sup>13</sup> It was reported that the group of FDNY Chiefs who discussed the building conditions and FDNY's capabilities for controlling the building fires formed the following conclusions concerning operations inside WTC 7:<sup>13,24</sup>

- The WTC 7 building had sustained damage from debris falling into it, and they were not sure about the structural stability of the building.
- The building had large fires burning on at least six floors. Any one of these six fires would have been considered a large incident during normal FDNY operations.
- There was no water immediately available for fighting the fires.
- They didn't have equipment, hose, standpipe kits, tools, and enough handie talkies for conducting operations inside the building.
- The reports that WTC 7 was making loud noises as it burned indicated to them that it might be unstable.<sup>33</sup>

Fire conditions were also observed on the east face of WTC 7, and the fire was reported to be moving north through the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> floor. Flames were coming out of the windows on this floor. The windows below the fire floor were intact. The windows on the fire floor were breaking out sequentially, in groups of two or three at a time, as the fire spread across the building. The rooms on the fire floor appeared to have reached a flashover condition. No heavy smoke was pushing out these windows.<sup>34</sup>

No accurate time is available for the following events during the WTC 7 operations; however, the sequence of events indicates that they occurred between approximately 12:00 noon and 2:00 p.m. Consolidated Edison (Con Edison) personnel arrived at the scene and consulted with FDNY. They

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<sup>32</sup> FDNY Interview 26, winter 2004.

<sup>33</sup> FDNY Interview 29, winter 2004.

<sup>34</sup> WTC 7 FDNY Interview 70, April 2004.

wanted to know if they should cut off the power at the WTC 7 power station. At that point in time, it was decided to leave the power on and not allow Con Edison personnel to enter the substations in WTC 7 because it was not safe. The Con Edison personnel also indicated that fuel tanks were located in the 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.<sup>13</sup>

At approximately 2:30 p.m., FDNY officers decided that WTC 7 building was not worth the additional risk to human life and to abandon WTC 7 completely. The final order was given to evacuate the site around the building.<sup>13,24</sup>

## **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. The order to abandon WTC 7 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.<sup>35</sup> 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 of this report).

## **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.
- At approximately 2:30 p.m., FDNY gave the order to forego firefighting activity and for personnel to withdraw to a safe distance from the building. This was based on recognition that WTC 7 had already been evacuated, fires were growing in the building, the building had potentially sustained significant structural damage, the building was producing interior noise that indicated potential instability in the structure, FDNY had lost many of its assets that would be needed to fight the fires inside WTC 7, and there was no usable water in lower Manhattan's hydrant system to fight the fires.

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<sup>35</sup> FDNY Interview 20, winter 2004.

- Soon after WTC 1 collapsed, and thus about 10:30 a.m., FDNY observed a fire on the west side of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor.
- During their multiple reconnaissance trips to the interior of WTC 7, FDNY personnel reported that they did not see any indication of burning liquid fuels before the building collapsed.
- At 4:33 p.m., Con Edison shut off the power at the WTC 7 substation.

## 6.9 REFERENCES

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## Chapter 7

# EVACUATION OF WTC 7

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### 7.1 OVERVIEW

The occupants of WTC 7 had clear warnings about the serious nature of their situation. They could feel and hear the percussion from the aircraft impacts, and those with access to windows facing south had views of the fire and smoke emanating from WTC 1 and WTC 2. Modern communication channels were also utilized, as televisions and land and cellular phones brought information and awareness to occupants in the building. Obtaining this information led many people to leave the building prior to any formal orders to do so.

The evacuation experience in WTC 7 was markedly different from that of the occupants of the towers. WTC 7 was not struck by an aircraft, and extensive fires were not ignited early and simultaneously on multiple floors. There was no immediate damage to the stairwells, the elevators were in operation for occupant use, and no occupants were trapped above fire floors without means of escape. Finally, WTC 7 did not collapse for 8½ hours after the aircraft impact into WTC 1. These factors provided more than ample time for people to leave the building safely. With the exception of a handful of officials who reported to the New York City Office of Emergency Management headquarters on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor, virtually all of the estimated 4,000 occupants (see below) evacuated prior to the collapse of WTC 2, the first of the two towers to collapse.

Thus, the examination of the evacuation of WTC 7 by the Investigation Team had a purpose different from the examination of the evacuation of the two towers, and required less thorough study. While the occupants left the building without encountering fires, emergency responders, or structural damage, their evacuation did take place during a perceived emergency. Moreover, there were multiple unexpected complications, such as might arise in any such emergency and affect management of the situation, including use of the lobby area as a triage center, the resulting constriction of egress flow, and limitation of expected exit paths due to the potential for debris injury outside the building.

### 7.2 THE EMERGENCY EGRESS SYSTEM

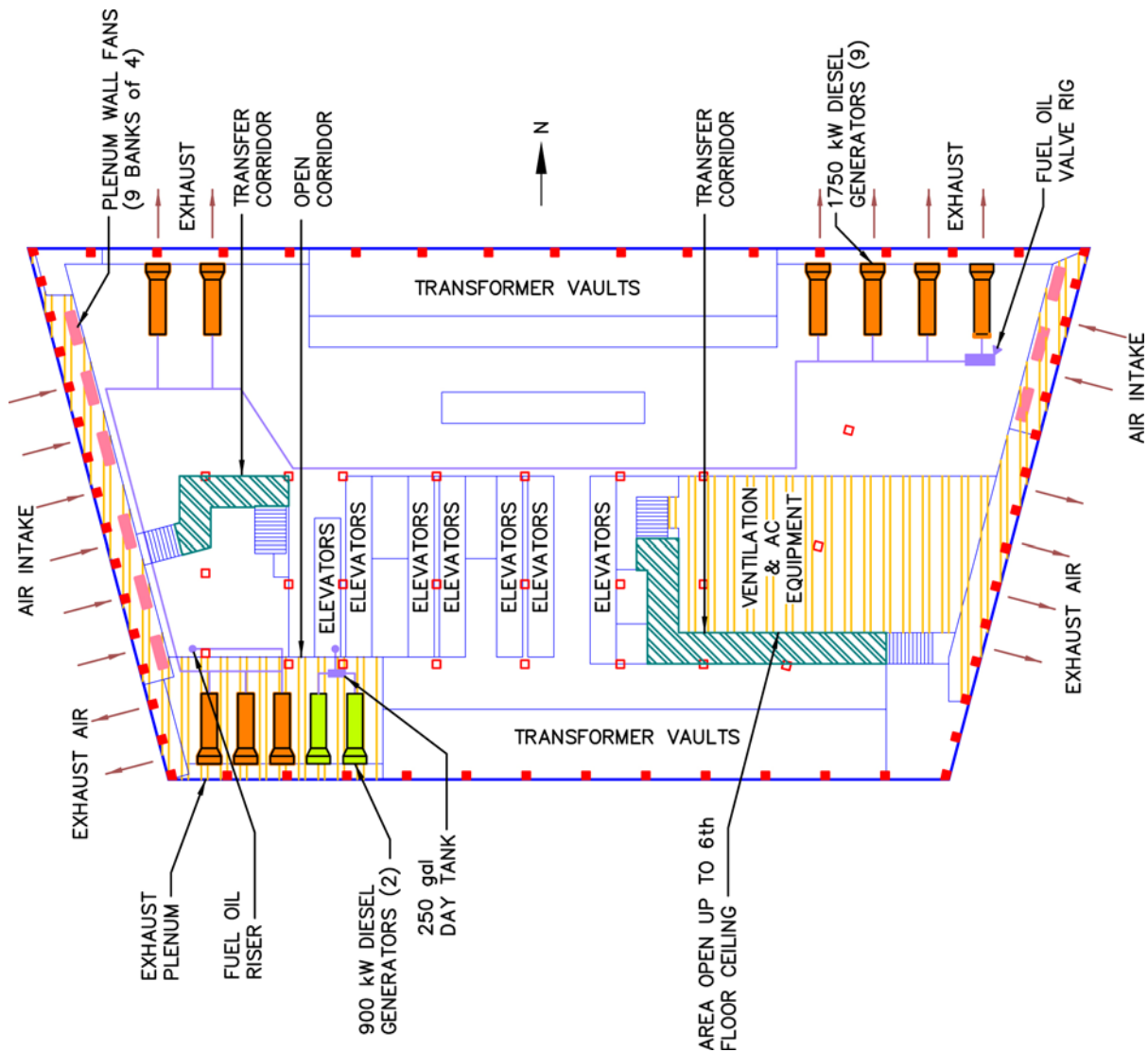
#### 7.2.1 Stairwell Design

The principal components of the emergency egress system in WTC 7 were two 58 in. (1.47 m) wide stairwells. These were significantly wider than the conventional 44 in. (1.12 m) wide stairwells. The stairs had a typical tread depth of 9 in. (23 cm) and a typical riser height of 8 in. (20 cm).<sup>1</sup> Stairwell A (also referred to as the west stairwell), located in the west-center part of the building, was vertically continuous from the 47<sup>th</sup> floor down to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. From there, an evacuee moved horizontally through a protected corridor to the west, where stairs led to the exit discharge at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor through the west wall

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<sup>1</sup> Emory Roth architectural drawing for WTC 7 #5, dated October 20, 1986.

onto Washington Street. Stairwell B (also referred to as the east stairwell), located slightly east of the geometric center of the building, was vertically continuous from the 47<sup>th</sup> floor down to the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor, where there was a horizontal transfer corridor. The transfer allowed use of the floor space above the easternmost elevator lobby and the elevator machinery on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor for the elevators below. From there, the stairwell continued down to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, where a second transfer corridor led south and east to the third leg of the stairwell (Figure 7-1), which ran from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, where the stair exited the building through the east wall to West Broadway (Figure 7-2). There were also two secondary exits located off the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby, leading south over Vesey Street to the Promenade and pedestrian bridge shown in Figure 7-3 and exits from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby onto Vesey Street. The photographs in Figure 7-4 and Figure 7-5, taken prior to September 11, 2001, show the exterior of the south and east exits, respectively.



**Figure 7-1. Fifth floor plan, indicating stairwell locations and the horizontal transfer corridors.**

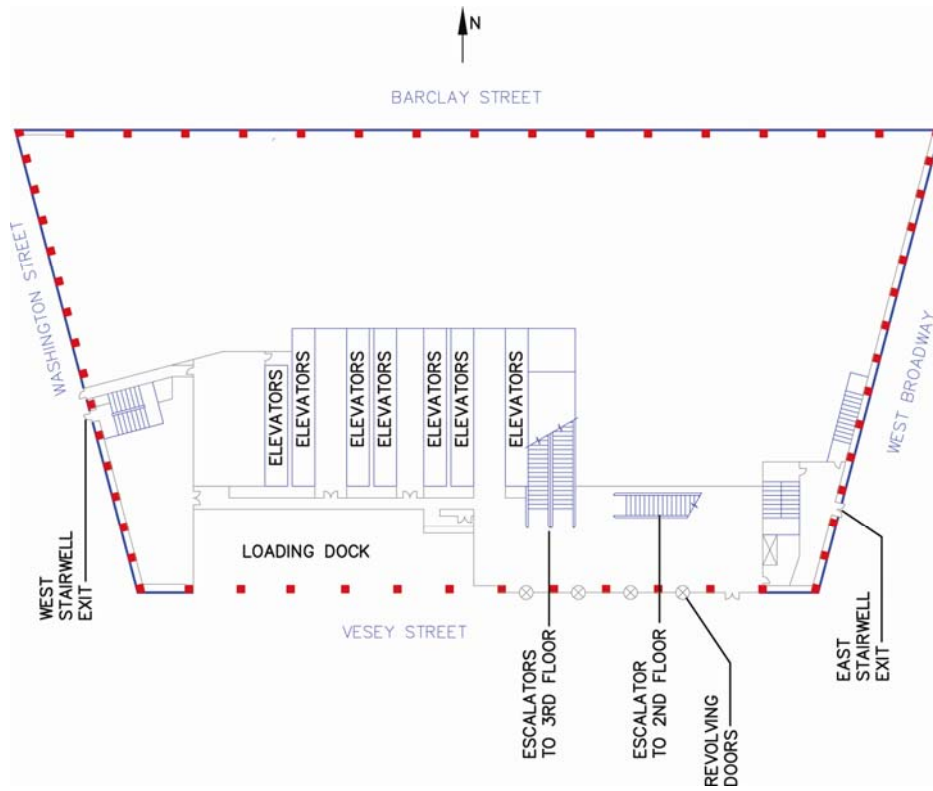


Figure 7-2. First floor plan, indicating the loading dock exit, stairwells, and escalators to and from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

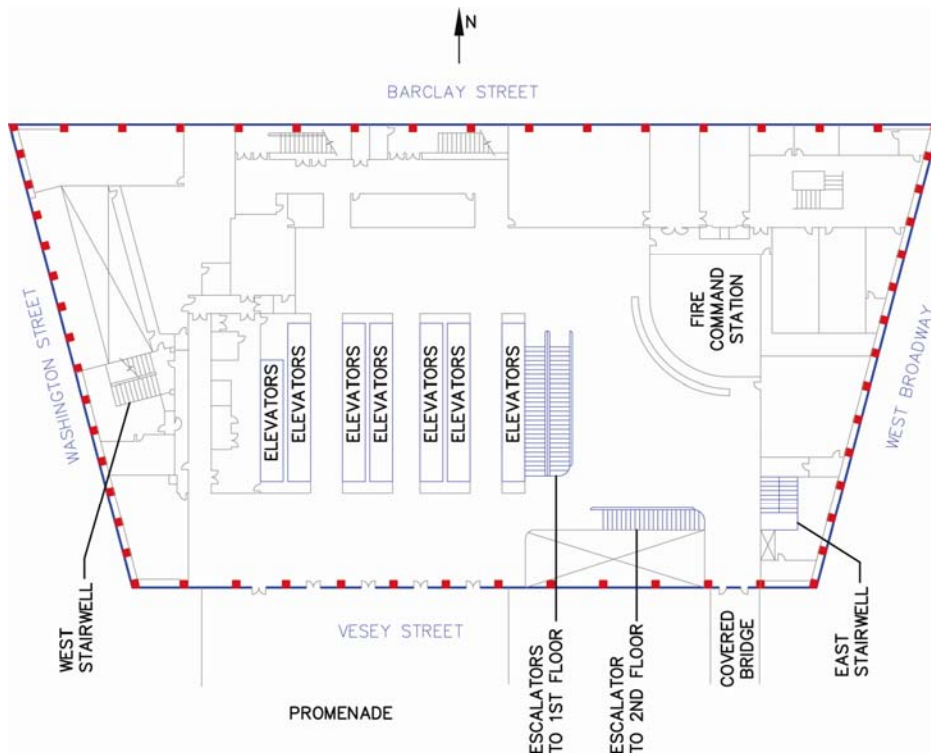
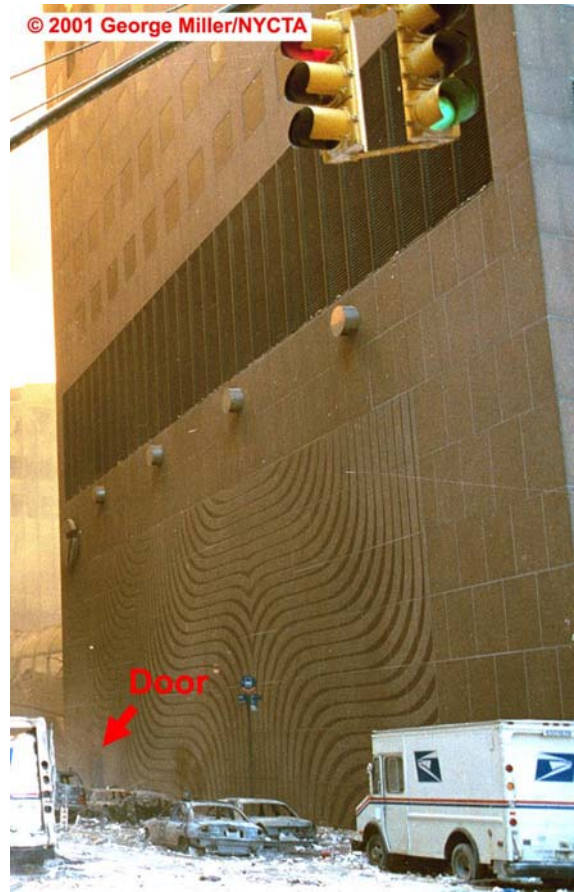


Figure 7-3. Third floor plan, indicating the elevators, stairs, escalators to and from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, and the exits to the Promenade and pedestrian bridge.



**Figure 7–4. Photograph of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor exits from the south face of WTC 7. The Promenade is on the left and the enclosed pedestrian bridge is on the right.**



**Figure 7–5. Photograph of the east face of WTC 7 showing the east exit door. (indicated by the text and arrow).**



## 7.2.2 Building Code Requirements for Stairwells

### General

The Investigation Team evaluated the capacity of the WTC 7 stairwells against various building code requirements. The codes considered were the building code in effect when WTC 7 was designed (New York City Building Code (NYCBC) of 1968) and the two current U.S. model building and fire codes (International Building Code of 2000, and NFPA 5000/Life Safety Code of 2003). In each case, the code provides formulas for calculating the nominal number of occupants per floor and the resulting stairwell capacity. (As presented in Section 7.5.2, the actual number of occupants per floor was considerably lower than these calculated values.) For WTC 7, the largest net floor area was approximately 34,800 ft<sup>2</sup>, or 3,200 m<sup>2</sup> (41,600 gross ft<sup>2</sup> less 6,800 ft<sup>2</sup> of core space).

### New York City Building Code (1968)

Table 6-2 in §C26-601 required 100 ft<sup>2</sup> per occupant (net) for business occupancies, yielding a nominal maximum occupant floor load of 348 persons per floor in WTC 7.<sup>2</sup> For this number of people, there were two requirements for stairwells.

- The code required one 0.56 m (22 in.) unit of stairwell width for 60 people for business occupancies. Sufficient capacity for 348 persons would have required six units of exit width, or 3.35 m (132 in.).
- For an occupant load of fewer than 500 people, §C26-602 (Exits from Floors) required a minimum of two stairwells, each equally sized, as no more than 50 percent of the occupants can be served by a single exit. Two equally sized stairwells meeting the design requirements of the NYCBC would have been at least 1.68 m (66 in.) wide each. Three stairwells, each 44 in. wide, would also have provided the minimum egress capacity for business occupancy floors.

WTC 7 had two stairwells, each 1.42 m to 1.47 m (56 in. to 58 in.) wide, which was not consistent with the NYCBC.

The NYCBC also included additional requirements.

- Each stairwell would be required to have a door at least 0.91 m (36 in.) wide. The actual doors were 0.91 m (36 in.) wide.
- The sum of two risers and one tread depth was required to be not less than 0.61 m (24 in.) nor greater than 0.65 m (25.5 in.).<sup>3</sup> Thus, the typical WTC 7 tread depth of 0.23 m (9 in.) and riser

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<sup>2</sup> Conference rooms or other meeting spaces might have increased the calculated occupant load, but were not included in these analyses.

<sup>3</sup> From the NFPA Life Safety Code Handbook (2003 Edition), the following note was made about the formula formerly used by NFPA and currently used by NYC: “This requirement was deleted because it was based on a 300-year-old French formula in which an inch was a slightly larger unit of measure than it is today. Moreover, people’s feet and stride length – the basis of the formula – were somewhat smaller at that time. Also, the requirement was originally intended only for stairs of moderate steepness or pitch.”

height of 0.20 m (8 in.) would satisfy this formula, at 25 in. However, according to Table 6-4 in the NYCBC, the stair riser may not exceed 0.20 m (7.75 in.) and the tread depth must be greater than 0.24 m (9.5 in.), each of which was slightly different from the WTC 7 design specification.

- New York City Local Law 16 (1984) modified the NYCBC minimum remoteness requirement to be 9 m (30 ft) or one-third the maximum travel distance of the floor (which was approximately 63 m, 205 ft, in WTC 7), whichever was greater. Therefore, the remoteness requirement would have been one-third of 63 m (205 ft.), or 21 m (68 ft). This was exceeded in WTC 7. The stairwells on floors 24 through 47 were separated by approximately 26 m (85 ft), while the stairs on floors 5 through 23 were separated by 35 m (113 ft).

### **International Building Code (2000)**

Chapter 10 of the 2000 International Building Code (IBC) requires 100 ft<sup>2</sup> per occupant (gross area), yielding a nominal maximum occupant floor load of 416 persons per floor in WTC 7.<sup>2</sup> A minimum of two equally sized stairwells would have been required (for occupant load less than 500 persons (Table 1005.2.1)). As WTC 7 was fully sprinklered, Table 1003.2.3 requires a minimum of 0.005 m (0.2 in.) per occupant, totaling 2.13 m (84 in.) of total stairwell width, or two 1.12 m (44 in.) stairwells. WTC 7 had two stairwells, each 1.42 m to 1.47 m (56 in. to 58 in.) wide.

Section 1003.3.1 requires that each stairwell have a door at least 0.81 m (32 in.) wide. As noted above, the actual doors were 0.91 m (36 in.) wide.

Section 1004.2.2.1 requires that for fully sprinklered buildings, the stairwell doors be located a distance of no less than one-third the length of the maximum overall diagonal dimension of the building or area to be served, which was 103 m (337 ft) for WTC 7. One-third of that is 34 m (112 ft). This was not exceeded on all floors in WTC 7. There, the stairwells on floors 24 through 47 were separated by approximately 26 m (85 ft), while the stairs on floors 5 through 23 were separated by 35 m (113 ft).

### **NFPA 5000 and NFPA 101 – Life Safety Code (2003)**

The gross square footage for WTC 7 was 41,600 ft<sup>2</sup> (3,875 m<sup>2</sup>). Table 7.3.1.2 of the Life Safety Code requires 100 ft<sup>2</sup> per occupant (gross) for a business occupancy, yielding a nominal occupant floor load of 416 persons per floor in WTC 7.<sup>2</sup> A minimum of two equally sized stairwells would be required for an occupant load of fewer than 500 persons (Section 7.4). Table 7.3.3.1 requires a minimum of 0.0076 m (0.3 in.) per occupant, totaling 3.2 m (125 in.) of total stairwell width, which may be satisfied by two 1.6 m (63 in.) stairwells, or three stairwells, sized at 1.1 m (44 in.) each. The two WTC 7 stairwells were each 1.42 m to 1.47 m (56 in. to 58 in.) wide.

Section 7.2.1.2 requires that each stairwell have a door at least 0.81 m (32 in.) wide. The doors in WTC 7 exceeded this requirement.

Section 7.5.1.3 addresses the remoteness of stairwells, with the purpose “to minimize the possibility that more than one has the potential to be blocked by any one fire or other emergency condition.”

Additionally, Section 7.5.1.3.3 requires that, for fully sprinklered buildings, the stairwell doors be located a distance of no less than one-third the length of the maximum overall diagonal dimension of the building or area to be served, which was 103 m (337 ft) for WTC 7. One-third of this is 34 m (112 ft). In WTC 7,

the stairwells on floors 24 through 47 were separated by approximately 26 m (85 ft), while stairs on Floors 5 through 23 were separated by 34 m (113 ft).

### 7.2.3 Elevators

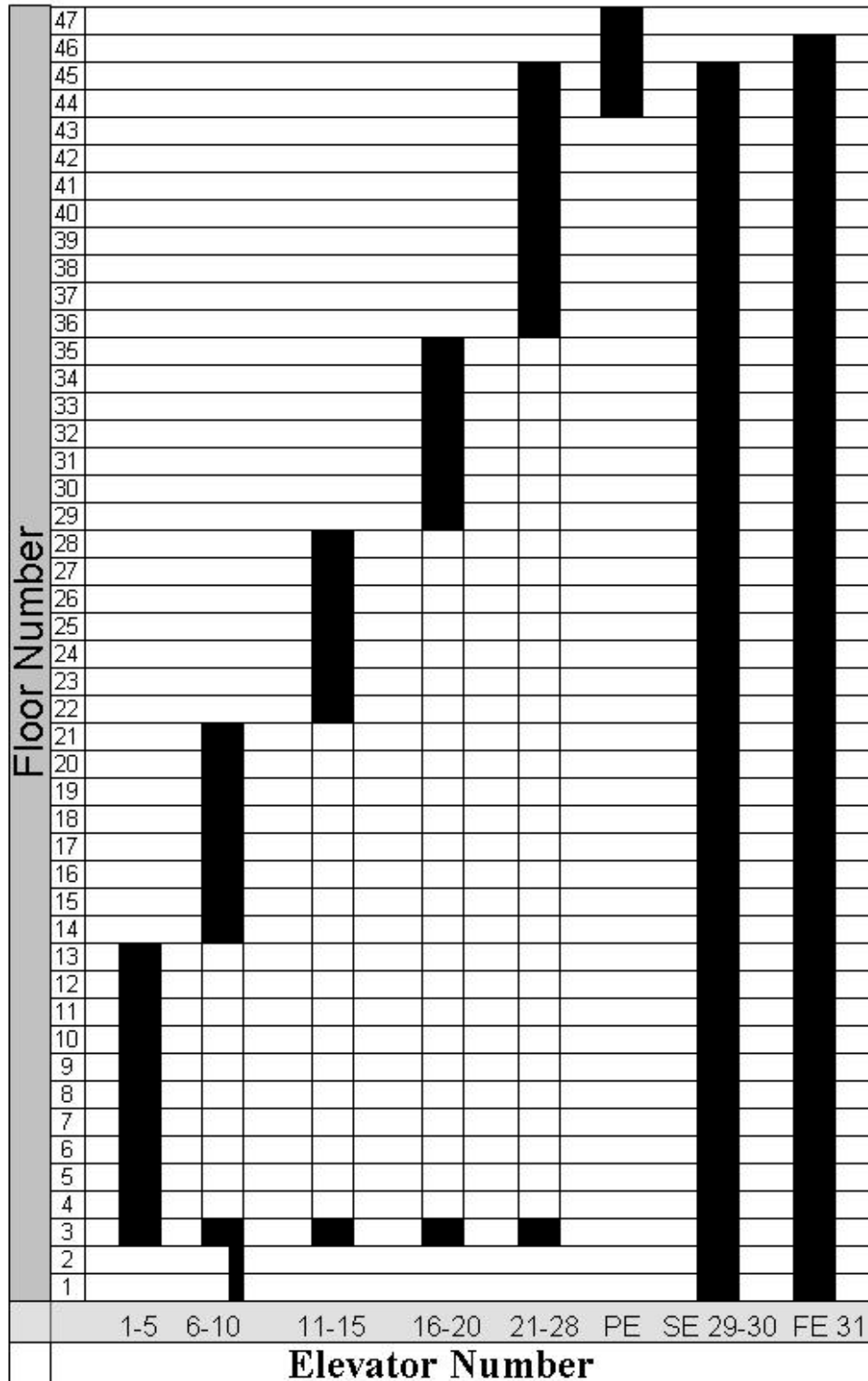
Building elevators are not conventionally considered part of the emergency egress system. However, on September 11, 2001, they were used extensively during the mass evacuation of the building. NIST estimated the service capacity of the elevator system.

Figure 7–2 shows the locations of the 31 elevators on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. Figure 7–6 indicates the floors served by each elevator. All the elevators were passenger elevators (PE), except elevators 29 through 31, denoted by SE (service elevator) and FE (freight elevator). The lobby on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor was the primary access and discharge floor for the occupant elevator system. Two escalators transported people from the entrances on the street level (1<sup>st</sup> floor) to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Two elevators (passenger elevators operated in parallel with the escalators, providing access for mobility impaired individuals or other individuals for whom the escalators were not safe or convenient (such as individuals with strollers, packages, or other objects).

The design parameters for the elevator system were included in the 1984 building specifications memo from the engineering design firm of Syska and Hennessy to PANYNJ. The three primary measures of elevator system performance used were the wait intervals, handling capacities, and the time-in-car.

- Wait intervals are the average amount of time between elevators leaving the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby during the morning rush period. They were specified to be 35 s or shorter.
- The handling capacities are the number of people the elevators are required to move during the 5 min busiest period in the morning. The requirement was that 12 percent of the population be served in this peak interval, after subtracting 10 percent for those likely to be absent during the rush period. The occupant load was defined uniquely for each elevator bank: 13.8 usable m<sup>2</sup> (149 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person for the elevators serving floors 4 through 13 (called low-rise elevators), 13.7 m<sup>2</sup> (147 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person for the mid-low elevators serving floors 14 through 21), 11.7 m<sup>2</sup> (126 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person for the mid-rise elevators serving floors 22 through 28, 12.5 m<sup>2</sup> (135 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person for the mid-high elevators serving floors 29 through 35, and 13.1 m<sup>2</sup> (141 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person for the high-rise elevators serving floors 36 through 45.
- The time-in-car parameter is the maximum period a person would spend in an elevator, from entering at the 3<sup>rd</sup> lobby level to arriving at the top floor served. This time was not to exceed 170 s.

Using these values, the elevator system was designed to serve approximately 9,000 people. From the floor plans, the Investigation Team estimated that the building could house about 8,000 employees plus an unknown number of visitors. (See Section 7.5.2.)



**Figure 7-6: Schematic of the elevators in WTC 7.**  
 The bars indicate the range of the elevators; the filled section of the bars indicates the floors at which they stopped.

## **7.3 EVACUATION RESOURCES AND PROCEDURES**

### **7.3.1 Roles and Responsibility**

Silverstein Properties (SP) had been the leaseholder and property manager for WTC 7 since its construction.

As described in Section 6.3.4, on-scene emergency staff included the Fire Safety Director and a number of Floor Wardens. In addition, there were responsible managers from the tenant firms and agencies. Their roles in an emergency were spelled out in the 1998 Fire Safety Plan, as were all the policies presented in this Section.

### **7.3.2 Elevator Usage During Emergencies**

While elevators were not considered in emergency evacuation planning, there were circumstances when their use was permitted. In particular, if the stairways serving a floor were unusable due to contamination from fire and/or smoke or if several floors involving large numbers of occupants were to be evacuated, the elevators were to be considered for use by occupants under the following conditions:

- If the elevator also serves the fire floor, that elevator must not be used. “However, elevators may be used if there is more than one bank of elevators and [the Floor Warden] is informed from the Fire Command Station that one bank is unaffected by the fire.”
- If elevators do not service the fire floor and there are no shaft openings to the fire floor, the elevators may be used.
- Elevators may be used by trained personnel or fire service.

The Floor Warden was to inform the Fire Command Station of the means employed by occupants for evacuation.

### **7.3.3 Occupant and Tenant Training**

The Fire Safety Plan required that new tenants conduct fire drills every three months for the first two years, and then every six months after the first two years. During the fire drill the floor warden notifies the occupants on the floor using the public address system that the fire drill is about to begin. The occupants report to the designated stairway, where the Fire Safety Director and Assistants give a brief talk on the purpose and objectives of the fire drill program and answer any questions.

### **7.3.4 Evacuation Procedures for Disabled Persons**

Upon notification of fire or odor of smoke, the fire brigade members were to be dispatched via manned freight elevator to a staging area one floor below the fire floor. The fire brigade would then use a stairway to ascend to the affected floor and assess the conditions. Based upon the assessment, the Fire Safety Director would then dispatch the elevator in order to evacuate disabled persons. Should elevator evacuation be considered dangerous, the fire brigade was to carry disabled persons down the stairs to

areas of safe refuge. Security, maintenance, and other personnel trained in evacuation procedures were to be dispatched to assist, as necessary.

## **7.4 DATA COLLECTION**

### **7.4.1 Interview Methodology**

NIST gathered first-hand accounts and observations of the activities and events inside the buildings on the morning of September 11, evaluated technical hypotheses about channels of awareness, modes of evacuation, and evacuation speed, and explored conscious motivations for occupant behaviors. Further, the timing of critical events, such as an announcement of full-building evacuation, was investigated.

NIST used two interview methods during the investigation of WTC 7: structured occupant interview techniques identical to the protocols used during occupant interviews with survivors from WTC 1 and WTC 2 evacuations and unstructured open-ended interviews with selected building officials who may possess specific information about the building or evacuation process on September 11, 2001.

### **7.4.2 Structured Occupant Interviews**

From the large number of structured interviews discussed in NIST NCSTAR 1-7, approximately 12 contained occupant experiences from WTC 7 from 8:46:30 a.m., when the attack on the World Trade Center began, until all the occupants had left the building.

The methodology for the face-to-face interviews is a synthesis of the Behavioral Sequence Interview Technique (BSIT), originally developed by Keating and Loftus (Keating and Loftus 1984), and the Cognitive Interviewing Method (CIM), originally developed by Fisher (Fisher et al. 2000) and Geiselman (Geiselman 1986). These two interviewing methodologies were developed with the purpose of assisting persons in retrieving more comprehensive and accurate memories of incidents and sharing important details. Both approaches begin by allowing the informant to retell an unimpeded account without interruption by the interviewer, and both initially employ a chronological retelling of information. However, BSIT was designed to yield a database of qualitative information that could be subjected to systematic analysis and consolidation, while CIM was designed to facilitate investigative interviews. Since the investigation is pursuing both goals (i.e., creation of a database of evacuation-related behaviors and an investigatory capture of information relevant to outcomes), the methodology combines these two approaches.

### **7.4.3 Unstructured Interviews with Selected Personnel**

In addition, NIST staff conducted unstructured interviews with selected building officials over the course of the Investigation. Typically, these interviews were investigatory in nature, with NIST seeking answers to specific questions related to the expertise of the particular official. In addition, the interviews were open-ended to allow for the opportunity to explore new directions. While the majority of the interviews were face-to-face, some material was gathered by telephone or e-mail. Twelve officials were interviewed in this manner.

## 7.5 THE EVACUATION

### 7.5.1 General

The full building evacuation of WTC 7 was unusual, due to the presence of an exterior threat to the occupants for the duration of the evacuation. Similar to the evacuation of WTC 2 prior to 9:03 a.m., elevators were available in WTC 7 for occupant use. However, unlike WTC 2, there was no underground concourse through which to direct the evacuees in order to avoid the debris emanating from WTC 1 and WTC 2. Therefore, while downward passage from the upper floors was relatively easy, safely exiting the building became a significant challenge to both the emergency management and occupants.

### 7.5.2 Estimation of the Number of Occupants

NIST made four separate estimates of the total building capacity using documents from PANYNJ and using the model building code design requirements:

- Appendix H of the WTC 7 Fire Safety Plan (1988) lists the daytime population of “persons normally employed in the Building” as 2,000. There is no substantiation for this number provided, and it is significantly lower than tenant floor plans and occupant loads calculated using the NYCBC or any other national model code.
- The elevator specifications were outlined in a 1984 memo from Syska and Hennessy to PANYNJ, as discussed in the section above. The specifications infer a design load of approximately 10 000 total building occupants. The elevator design load was 9,000 occupants, as the memo assumed that 10 percent of the population would be absent at the peak demand.
- According to the NYCBC, the design occupant load for the building would have been 348 persons per floor. Assuming approximately 40 occupied floors (ignoring mechanical floors and lobbies), this would yield a rough occupant load of approximately 14,000 persons.
- From the architectural drawings, there were desks and chairs for about 8,000 people, including visitors. Using this number would presume that all the organizations in the building were fully staffed.

As no representative sampling method was applied to interviews of occupants of WTC 7, NIST cannot make a scientific estimate of the population of occupants inside the building at 8:46:30 a.m. on September 11, 2001. However, upon estimating the building capacity, two separate techniques for estimating the population of occupants on September 11, 2001 can be offered:

- During interviews with building officials responsible for emergency management operations inside the building that morning, NIST asked three officials to estimate the number of occupants present in the building at the time of the first attack. The consensus estimate of the three officials was that approximately 5,000 persons were present, including occupants who entered WTC 7

from WTC 5 and WTC 6 across the pedestrian bridges after the attacks on WTC 1 and WTC 2.<sup>4</sup> However, the estimate has a significant uncertainty.

- In WTC 1 and WTC 2, statistical techniques from the representative sampling of occupant interviews resulted in an estimate that the towers were between one-third and one-half full on September 11, 2001 (NCSTAR 1, 2005). Assuming the same rate of occupancy in WTC 7 would result in an estimated occupant load of 3,000 persons (one-third of 10,000) to 5,000 persons (one-half of 10,000 persons).

Based on these numbers, NIST estimated a likely total building occupant load of up to 8,000 people (including visitors) on a typical day and estimated the building to have been half full (approximately 4,000 people) just before the first airplane attack on September 11, 2001. The uncertainty in each value was taken as about  $\pm 25$  percent.

### 7.5.3 Awareness of the Emergency: 8:46 a.m. EDT

When the first aircraft hit WTC 1 at 8:46 a.m., occupants throughout WTC 7 reported hearing a loud explosion outside the building. A window washer on the north side of the roof of WTC 7 observed the impact and was knocked unconscious by it. A building employee on a low floor observed that the lights blinked and was concerned about the implications of a power interruption to the tenants who were financial firms and depended upon uninterrupted supply of power.<sup>4</sup> Another building employee, upon seeing the lights flicker, assumed someone had detonated a truck bomb near the building, perhaps recalling the 1993 bomb incident at the WTC complex.<sup>4</sup> Several occupants reported hearing an explosion and/or feeling the building shake. One occupant of WTC 7 on a floor in the teens said: “Our office went dark, as a shadow passed over us; and I wanted to see what it was. I put down my work and looked up [and then] I heard the noise of the first plane hitting.”<sup>5</sup> The first reaction of many occupants was to discuss the proper course of action with others in order to decide whether to evacuate the building.

### 7.5.4 Evacuation of the Tenant Floors

The occupants’ perceptions of risk defined their initial activity. None of the interviewed occupants indicated that they felt their lives were in immediate danger. As one occupant on a floor in the 10’s said: “I went back to my office, packed my lunch, and shut down my computer. I didn’t feel any sense of urgency; our building wasn’t in direct danger.”<sup>6</sup> Consistent with this low risk perception, most occupants chose to gather belongings prior to evacuation. One occupant reported that he/she went back to the task on which he/she was working prior to the attack, until he/she was instructed by a supervisor or floor warden to evacuate the floor.<sup>5</sup> Other occupants gathered around a television to watch news coverage of the events in WTC 1.

Officials from Silverstein Properties (SP), Solomon Smith Barney (SSB), the U.S. Secret Service (USSS), the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM), The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) were involved at different times and places in

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<sup>4</sup> NIST Interview 11402.

<sup>5</sup> NIST Interview 1000045.

<sup>6</sup> NIST Interview 7000004.



deciding whether and when to evacuate WTC 7.<sup>7</sup> While it is clear that several independent decisions were taken to order a full building evacuation, NIST found only one individual who stated that a public address announcement was actually delivered at approximately 9:45 a.m.,<sup>7</sup> but could not verify with a second source that such an order was communicated to the building occupants. However, NIST inferred from the limited interviews, and the total time it took to clear the building, that most of the occupants began moving to the stairwells and elevators within minutes of the aircraft impact on WTC 1.

- In the lobby of WTC 7, a tenant representative asked the building fire safety directors whether or not to issue an evacuation order. The preliminary decision, prior to WTC 2 being attacked, was not to evacuate WTC 7. Shortly after WTC 2 was attacked, however, the representative witnessed OEM order a SP manager to evacuate the building. The representative never heard an evacuation announcement over the PA system.<sup>8</sup>
- After WTC 2 and the Pentagon were attacked, an OEM manager had a conversation on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor of WTC 7 (OEM office) with unidentified representatives of the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, WTC security, and other OEM officials, and he personally ordered the evacuation of WTC 7, 15 min prior to the collapse of WTC 2.<sup>7</sup> This corroborates the tenant representative's statement, establishing the time to have been about 9:45. (By all accounts, the building was essentially empty at this point, and he acknowledged that many had already self-evacuated.)
- Shortly before the attack on WTC 2, an SP manager reported that an OEM person was aware that there was a second plane in the air, that they didn't know where it was going, and that they had better evacuate WTC 7. Two engineers were dispatched to locate a missing window washer and were on the roof of 7 when WTC 2 was hit, forcing them to take cover. There was no indication of whether the evacuation order was executed over the PA system.<sup>4</sup>
- All of the interviewed occupants were asked if they heard a PA announcement regarding building evacuation, and only one indicated hearing the announcement. NIST did confirm a building fire alarm was actively sounding a "whoop" siren in the lobby during the time period after WTC 2 collapsed, but prior to the collapse of WTC 1 (Section 5.5.1). This corroborates the readout from the alarm system, as reported in Section 4.2.3, which indicated that the alarm system was activated at 10:00 a.m., in response to the collapse of WTC 2.

### 7.5.5 Congestion in the WTC 7 Lobby

Occupants who evacuated to the lobby promptly after the attack on WTC 1 at 8:46 a.m. were able to exit the building using the primary exits to the west and east. Shortly after WTC 2 was attacked at 9:03 a.m., building officials (representatives from SP, SSB, USSS, and OEM) decided to prevent occupants from exiting the building due to a danger of being hit by debris from WTC 1 (Section 5.5.1).<sup>4,5</sup> Hundreds of people began accumulating in the WTC 7 lobby, and were described as "packed like sardines."<sup>9</sup> (See Figure 7–2 and Figure 7–3 for the locations of lobby entrances/exits.) The crowd included:

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<sup>7</sup> NIST Interview 041504.

<sup>8</sup> NIST Interview 73347.

<sup>9</sup> NIST Interview 7000001.

- Occupants from WTC 7 who had descended from the tenant floors using the elevators;
- Occupants who had descended the east stairwell of WTC 7, and were redirected into the lobby at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor by a security guard;<sup>4</sup>
- Occupants of WTC 5 and WTC 6 (described by eyewitnesses as a “flood”<sup>4</sup>), who had used the tubular and plaza bridges to cross Vesey Street (from the south) into WTC 7 in an effort to move away from WTC 1 and WTC 2; and
- Injured people from WTC 1 in a medical triage post, established by the OEM in the WTC 7 lobby.<sup>4</sup>

Initially, the crowd in the lobby was concentrated near the large south lobby windows, which faced toward WTC 1. Once WTC 2 was attacked, the crowd recoiled, moving away from these windows.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after the attack on WTC 2, the escalators connecting the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby area and the 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby area were turned off in order to allow occupants to use both escalators to descend safely.<sup>4</sup> A building manager raised the loading dock doors (not generally considered to be a part of the building egress system) on the west end of the south side of the building and directed the occupants to proceed west on Vesey Street and then north on the west side of Washington Street, away from WTC 1 and WTC 2. In addition to this exit being protected by the overhead Promenade Bridge on Vesey Street, the path was protected on Washington Street by scaffolding on the exterior of the Verizon building. Occupants were instructed to stay close to the building and proceed north and away from the WTC complex.<sup>4</sup>

By the time WTC 2 collapsed, it appears that all the building occupants who intended to leave WTC 7 had done so.

### **7.5.6 Occupancy after 10:00 a.m. EDT**

Several individuals were inside WTC 7 after the collapses of WTC 2 and WTC 1, respectively, each with varied reasons to be inside the building.

- Several people were still in the building at the time when WTC 2 collapsed 9:59:03 a.m. These included four representatives from Silverstein Properties, two U.S. Secret Service agents, and two other occupants with business inside the building. The rescue of these last two was recounted in Section 6.5.2.
- Video footage (Chapter 5) showed a reporter entering WTC 7 through the revolving doors from Vesey St. some time after WTC 2 collapsed, but prior to the WTC 1 collapse. The 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby, with substantial broken glass on the south façade, had a significant layer of dust and debris. The reporter ascended the escalator to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby, where he interviewed an agent from the U.S. Secret Service. After panning the western and southern walls of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby and discussing the collapse of WTC 2, the reporter descended the (stopped) escalator and exited WTC 7 through the broken glass wall. Of significant note was the “whoop” of the fire alarm audible in the lobbies (Section 5.5.1).

- A firefighter entered WTC 7 shortly after the collapse of WTC 1 and remained inside for approximately 5 min, until finding out that the building had been evacuated. Around 3:00 pm, while on the corner of Barclay Street and West Broadway, the firefighter was approached by six or seven law enforcement officers who requested assistance in rescuing police dogs from the underground level of WTC 7. Upon entering the basement and looking for the place where the dogs were kept, they observed several areas of significant collapse debris. After determining that the area where the dogs were kept was not safe, they quickly made their way out of the building using the same driveway ramp through which they had entered.<sup>10</sup>

### 7.5.7 Estimation of the Minimum Required Evacuation Time

All modes of evacuation were available to the occupants on September 11, 2001, including elevators and stairwells. However, it was not known what fraction of the occupants took each mode.

NIST estimated that, if everyone had used the elevators, assuming optimal car loading, and allowing about 5 min of activity before people began moving toward the elevator lobbies (see NCSTAR 1-7, 2005), everyone could have been transported to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby in about 30 minutes.

- The elevator system in WTC 7 was designed to move 12 percent of 90 percent of the building population in 5 min. Had there been about 5,000 people (the upper limit of the actual occupancy estimate in Section 7.5.2) in the building at that time on September 11, 2001, it would have taken approximately 20 min for the elevators to have transferred everyone from their floor of origin to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby. Even if the maximum estimate of 14,000 people had been present at the start of the evacuation, the elevators would have taken approximately 60 min to move all of the occupants to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lobby.
- If the elevator evacuation were combined with stairwell evacuation, the estimate of overall evacuation time could be either reduced (if only people in the lower part of the building used the stairs) or increased (if people on the upper floors chose to use the stairs rather than the elevators).

The observed evacuation time from WTC 7 on September 11, 2001 was less than 75 min. However, the evacuation process had several atypical aspects, some slowing the evacuation process and some speeding the evacuation process:

- No building evacuation announcement was broadcast prior to approximately 9:45 a.m.
- Evacuation from the lobby and stairwells was interrupted while building management decided upon the safest path away from the building.
- Occupants from other buildings on the WTC site evacuated into the WTC 7 lobby, adding to the routine occupant load.
- Elevators were available and widely used for occupant evacuation.

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<sup>10</sup> FDNY Interview 74, Spring 2004.

## 7.6 FINDINGS

- By the conventional measure of life safety, the evacuation of WTC 7 was successful, as NIST identified no life-threatening injuries or fatalities of building occupants on September 11, 2001. Most of the occupants initiated their own evacuation shortly after WTC 1 was attacked, and the building was safely evacuated prior to the collapse of WTC 2. Evacuation took just over an hour to complete, which was somewhat longer than the minimum time expected if elevators and stairs were used to maximum advantage.
- While no occupants from WTC 7 were killed on September 11, 2001, evacuation management did not provide timely evacuation instructions to building occupants during the event. Several key officials determined independently to evacuate WTC 7, from several minutes before WTC 2 was attacked ( $\approx$  9:00 a.m.) and shortly after WTC 2 was attacked ( $\approx$  9:05 a.m.), to shortly after the Pentagon was attacked ( $\approx$  9:45 a.m.). The decisions appear not to have resulted in actually delivering specific guidance to the occupants via the public address system until approximately 9:45 a.m.
- Considerable crowding in the lobby of WTC 7 occurred. Occupants arrived in the lobby from both stairwells, from the elevators, and from other WTC buildings, and were held in the lobby until a safe exterior exit was identified by emergency management officials.
- The calculated stairwell capacity was insufficient to meet the requirements of the NYCBC in effect during the design and construction period, if the building were occupied at the calculated maximum level ( $\approx$  14,000 people). The capacity was sufficient for the normal occupancy of the building ( $\approx$  8,000 workers plus visitors), estimated by NIST, and was more than sufficient for the occupancy on September 11, 2001 ( $\approx$  4,000 people), also estimated by NIST. The stairwell capacity met the requirement of the (subsequent) 2000 edition of the IBC, but not the 2003 edition of NFPA 5000.
- The separation of the stairwell doors met the requirement of the 1968 NYCBC. On some floors, the separation of the stairwell doors was below the remoteness requirements in the 2000 IBC and the 2003 NFPA 5000.
- In addition to the length of time that WTC 7 withstood the internal fires, some specific people actions likely contributed to the speed and overall success of the evacuation. Evacuation drills had been conducted every six months in WTC 7. On September 11, 2001, the decision to prevent occupants from exiting the stairwells out into the streets where they could be impacted by debris from WTC 1 and WTC 2 likely prevented injuries or deaths. Using the loading dock exit to provide overhead protection, combined with the scaffolding protection along the other side of Washington Street, was an example of spontaneous decision-making on the part of the building management which likely contributed to the positive outcome.

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## Chapter 8

# INITIATING EVENT HYPOTHESES

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the possible initiating event and collapse propagation hypotheses that formed the basis of the technical approach to determine why and how the 47 story WTC 7 building collapsed on September 11, 2001. Specifically, NIST considered (1) building contents fires on tenant floors, (2) fuel oil fires from leaks in the emergency generator fuel systems, (3) hypothetical blast events, and (4) fires in the Con Edison substation.

The leading collapse hypothesis will be presented first, followed by supporting evidence and calculations that led to the hypothesis. Prediction of the growth and spread of fires from fire simulation models, analysis of heating of the structural elements due to these fires, and structural analysis of the initiating event hypothesis and global response are presented in subsequent chapters.

### 8.2 LEADING COLLAPSE HYPOTHESIS FOR WTC 7

Based on observations and analyses of photographic and videographic records, critical study of steel framing, and simplified and detailed analyses to investigate possible failure modes that could lead to an initiating event, the following leading collapse hypothesis was identified.

#### Initial Local Failure for Collapse Initiation

An initial local failure occurred at the lower floors (below Floor 13) of the building due to fire-induced floor failures, leading to buckling of a critical column (the initiating event) which supported a large-span floor bay with an area of about 2,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.

The leading hypothesis for the failure sequence that characterized the initial local failure was based on fire-induced failure events in the tenant floors. Floor beams, girders, slabs, and connections heated more quickly and to higher temperatures than the columns. Elevated temperatures in the floor elements led to thermal expansion, with or without thermal weakening and sagging, which resulted in failure of floor connections and/or buckling of floor beams. Sufficient floor component failures (connections and/or beams) resulted in at least one long unsupported column at the lower floors. This column buckled and led to the initiation of global collapse.

#### Vertical Progression of Failure

Vertical progression of the initial local failure occurred up to the east penthouse, and as the large floor bays became unable to redistribute the loads, this initial local failure brought down the interior structure below the east penthouse.

## Horizontal Progression of Failure

Triggered by damage due to the vertical failure, horizontal progression of the failure across the lower floors (in the region of Floors 5 and 7 that were much thicker and more heavily reinforced than the rest of the floors) resulted in a progressive collapse of the entire structure.

## Other Collapse-Related Possibilities

The leading hypothesis was based on an initial local failure caused by ordinary building contents fires, not fires from leaking pressurized fuel lines or fuel from day tanks. These other factors were considered as possible collapse hypotheses, but ruled out as discussed subsequently in Section 8.9.

While NIST found no evidence of a blast or controlled demolition event, it evaluated the consequences of hypothetical blast scenarios that could have led to the structural failure of one or more critical elements (see Section 8.9.2).

## 8.3 WTC 7 COLLAPSE OBSERVATIONS

### 8.3.1 Visual Images

The collapse of WTC 7 was recorded on several videos taken from various locations, and the study of these videos was reported in Section 5.7. Table 5–3 shows the timeline for major WTC 7 collapse observations. Several of the collapse observations are repeated here with specific reference to annotated figures, which also appear in Section 5.7.

- East edge of the east penthouse started to move downward, roofline quickly “kinked” roughly 40 percent of the way from the east side of the penthouse (Figure 8–1).
- Two sections of the east penthouse rotate inward as the roof below gave way and the east section disappeared below the roof parapet wall (Figure 8–2). Window breakage occurred on the north face of the building near column lines 43 and 45 as the penthouse collapsed.
- Horizontal motion of the northwest corner of the building was detected during the collapse of the east penthouse as evidenced by video frame subtraction, as explained in Chapter 5 (Figure 8–3.)
- Daylight was visible through the windows on the 47<sup>th</sup> floor after the entire east side of roof collapsed (Figure 8–4).
- Beginning of global collapse of WTC 7 was detected as the roofline below the location of the east penthouse and the eastern end of the screenwall started dropping simultaneously; and the north wall rotated and developed a kink near column 47 (see Figure 8–5).
- The entire upper portion of the building, i.e., all floors visible in the videos, began to move downward, and window breakage occurred on the west side of the north face between column lines 53 and 55 as the building collapsed (Figure 8–6). The dashed red lines in Figure 8-6 are the silhouette of the building from Figure 8–1. It is included to provide a qualitative indication of the extent to which the upper portion of WTC 7 had descended.



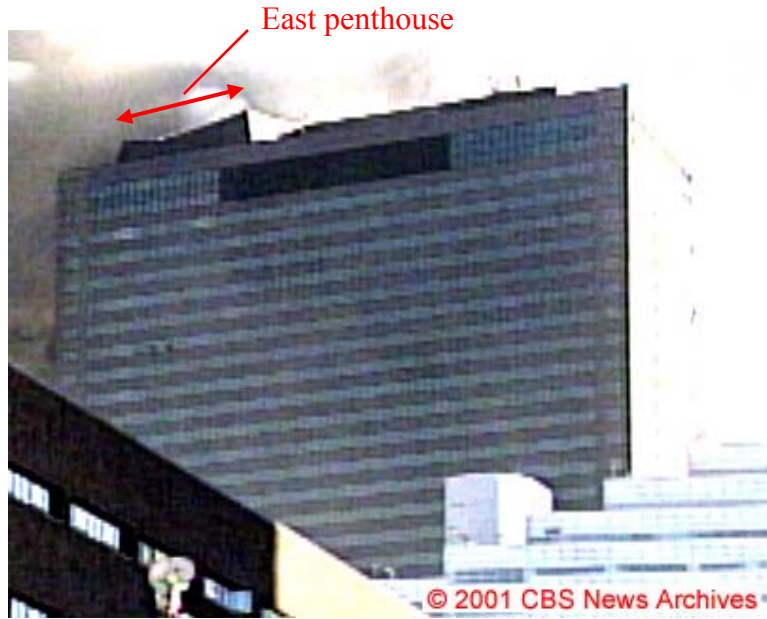


Figure 8–1. East penthouse kinks and begins to collapse.

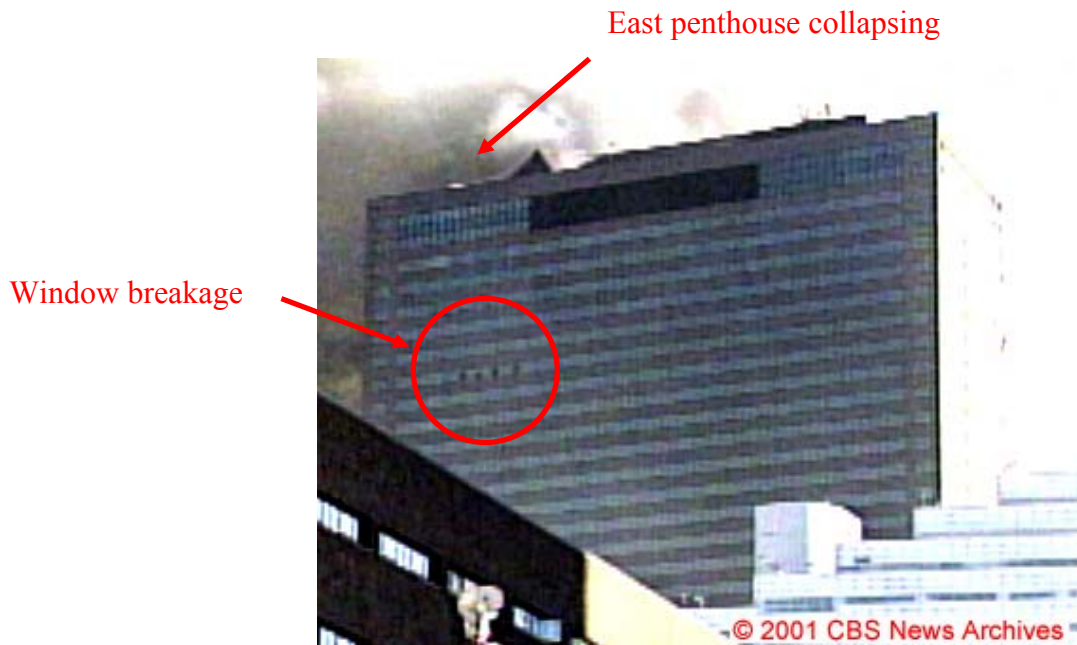


Figure 8–2. East penthouse collapses as roof gives way – windows break between column lines 43 and 45.

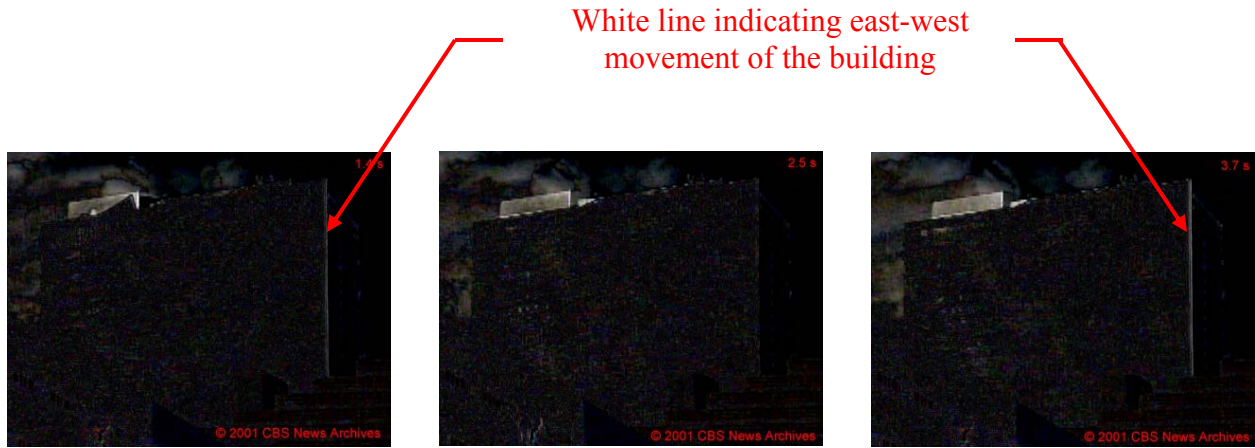


Figure 8–3. Motion of northwest edge of building detected by video frame subtraction.



Figure 8–4. Daylight visible where roof collapsed on east side of building.



**Figure 8–5. Global collapse of WTC 7 begins about seven seconds after the onset of collapse of the east penthouse.**



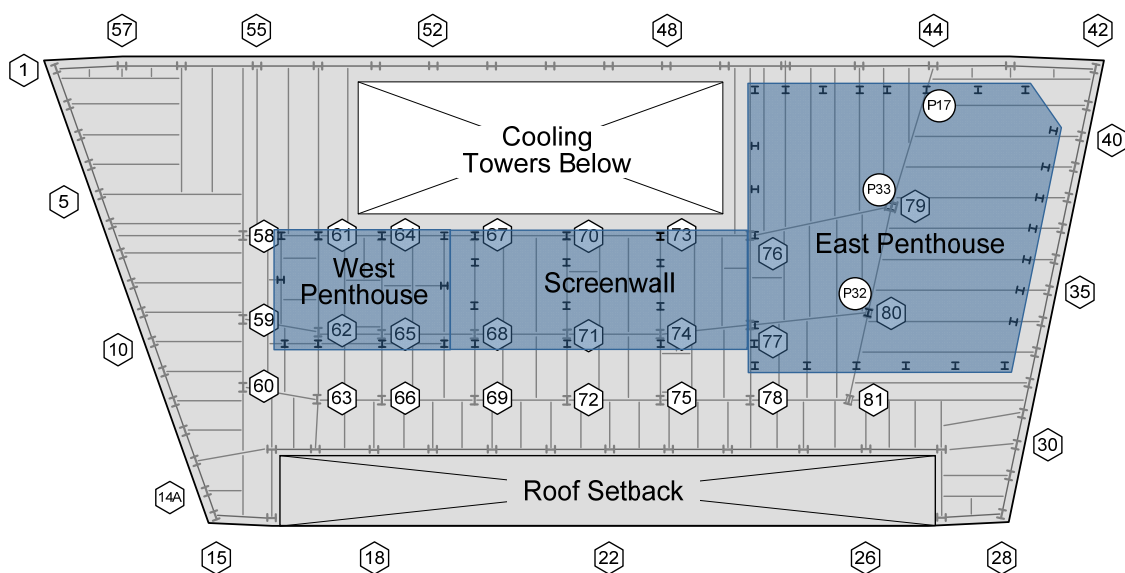
**Figure 8–6. Entire building continues to collapse.**

### 8.3.2 Implications of Collapse Observations

In this section, the key observations noted above are considered in the context of the building’s framing to understand their relevance to the collapse initiation.

## Onset of collapse of the east penthouse

A video taken from essentially due north was used to measure the location of the “fold” that formed in the north wall of the east penthouse at the onset of collapse (Section 5.7.2). The kink formed approximately 40 percent of the distance from the east edge of the penthouse to the west edge of the penthouse (Figure 8–1). Plotting this location on the penthouse framing plan shows that the kink was located essentially at Post 17 (indicated as “P17” in Figure 8–7). This post was supported directly on the roof girder spanning between Column 79 on the interior of the building and Column 44 on the exterior. This indicated that the girder supported on Columns 79 and 44 likely failed at that instant; and, since exterior column 44 was observed in the video to not fail, and the entire penthouse collapsed, not just the north portion, it was likely that initiation of the collapse of the east penthouse was preceded by collapse of Column 79.



Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 8–7. Framing of east penthouse.**

## Inward Rotation of the East Penthouse as the Roof Below Gives Way

For the widespread failure of the roof on the east side of the building to occur, as evidenced by daylight visible through the upper story windows (Figure 8–4), it appeared likely that Column 79 failed along with the girders that framed into it (including the one that spanned to Column 44) and the surrounding roof beams. The east side of this penthouse was observed to first move downward before rotating inward, which would be consistent with loss of support of the roof beams. The west side of the east penthouse did not move downward initially (Figure 8–2), but rather rotated about its base, which aligned with the east edge of the core along Columns 76, 77 and 78 (Figure 8–7). Thus, at the time of collapse of the east penthouse, it is likely that at least the east edge of the core was still supporting load.

### East-west motion of the building as the east penthouse collapses

As evidenced by the breaking glass in the upper stories (Figure 8–2 and Figure 8–4), collapse on the east side of the building was not limited to the roof and penthouse. Collapses were likely occurring on many floors below with sufficient energy to cause the 47 story building to move laterally in its strong (east-west) direction (Figure 8–3). An analysis of one of the videos using frame subtraction to highlight differences between two video frames (Appendix C), revealed that the northwest edge of the building showed horizontal motion of around 15 in. peak-to-peak oscillation as the east penthouse collapsed (Figure 8–8). Measurable, though smaller, vibrations (about  $\pm 2$  in.) were detected at least 6 s before the east penthouse began to collapse. This suggested that a major disturbance occurred within the building prior to visible evidence of collapse (movement of the east penthouse) from available video recordings.

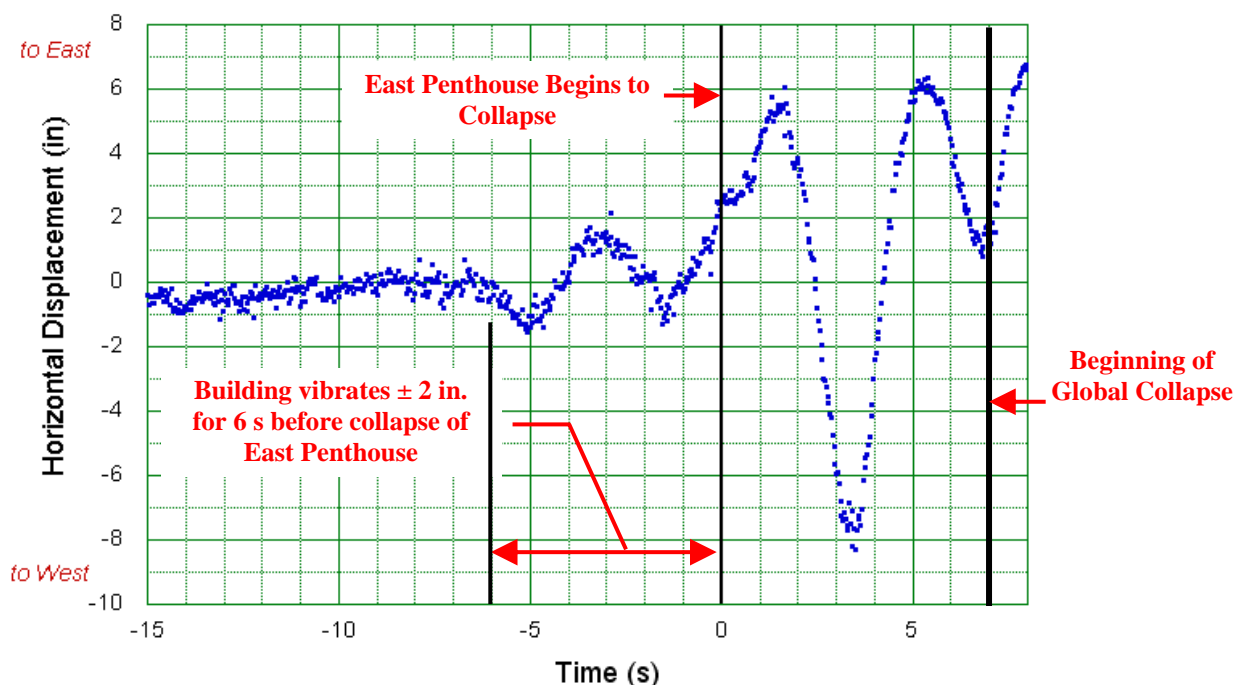


Figure 8–8. Horizontal motion detected on the northwest edge of the building.

### Collapse of the entire building

The global collapse of WTC 7 began approximately 7 s after the onset of collapse of the east penthouse (Figure 8–5). At this time, the entire upper section of the building -- all floors visible in the videos -- moved downward at the same time suggesting widespread failure of the support structure (columns and/or transfer trusses) in the lower levels of the building (Figure 8–6).

## 8.4 BUILDING CONTENTS FIRES

If, as identified above, failure of Column 79 were consistent with the observations and interpretations of the photographic and videographic evidence, then the possible causes of failure of column 79 needed to be investigated.

Steel column failure is generally characterized by inelastic buckling and, as a consequence, is a function of inelastic material behavior (i.e., yielding) and local and/or global instability. The strength of a column is related to the properties of the steel (in this case at elevated temperatures), the shape of the cross section, and the unbraced length (i.e., the distance between points of lateral support). In a building frame, a column is considered to be braced where each floor frames into the column and, thus, the unbraced length would be the floor-to-floor height. Since a column's cross section is not likely to change, a column subject to fire could fail (1) if its material properties are diminished by fire exposure sufficient to result in column instability, or (2) if failures of floor framing increase the unbraced length sufficient to result in column instability. Both of these possible hypotheses were investigated.

#### **8.4.1 Column Failure by Heating**

A thermal analysis was conducted of Column 79 typical of lower floors (W14x730 section with 2 in. x 26 in. cover plates) and 7/8 in. of thermal insulation (see Chapter 9). Based on the knowledge that the yield strength of steel is reduced to 50 percent of its room temperature value at approximately 500 °C to 600 °C, it was found that it would take roughly 6 h of continuous exposure from a fully developed fire to reach these temperatures.

Heating of a column could occur as a result of a building contents fire, or as had been suggested, from a fuel oil fire resulting from rupture of a fuel line supplying one of several emergency generators in the building. Prediction of growth and spread of building contents fires (Chapter 9) indicated that such fires did not persist at any one location for more than about 20 min to 30 min, which is consistent with observations of fires in windows (Chapter 5). Therefore, it would not have been possible for a building contents fire to have heated a massive, insulated column such as Column 79 to the point of failure.

Sections 8.9.1 shows that the worst-case scenarios associated with ruptured fuel lines generated fires that could not be sustained long enough, would have produced too little heat to raise the temperatures of the steel to the point of significant loss of strength, and/or would have led to the flowing of smoke out the ventilation louvers, which contradicts the visual evidence.

#### **8.4.2 Column Failure by Loss of Lateral Support (increased unbraced length)**

Floors that frame into a column provide lateral support to the column. If a building had a regular floor-to-floor height,  $h$ , then failure of one floor would result in an unbraced column length of  $2h$ . Likewise, failure of two floors would result in an unbraced column length of  $3h$ , and so on. If a sufficient number of floors were to fail, the column could buckle even if it were not weakened by heating. This simple explanation assumes that the load on a column is constant. In reality, the load on a column can change as fires grow and spread and non-uniformly heat the steel frame. Such load redistribution is accounted for in the analyses conducted in this investigation. The possibility of floor failure in fire is explored in detail in later sections of this chapter.

Failure of a floor beam in fire is a rare event, and, indeed, there have been many building fires that have not resulted in even local failures of the floor system. The challenge was to determine if a fire-induced floor system failure could occur in WTC 7 under an ordinary building contents fire.

## 8.5 LESSONS FROM HISTORIC HIGH-RISE FIRES

To determine whether there were aspects of the design or construction of the building that could have contributed to column failure by loss of lateral support, NIST considered other buildings that had survived multiple-floor fires, particularly those for which there is documentation on the performance of the structural system as well as characterization of the fire conditions. Three buildings were considered: One Meridian Plaza building in Philadelphia, the First Interstate Bank building in Los Angeles, and the eight story steel frame building used in some Cardington Tests in England. The Cardington Test structure was not subjected to fires on multiple floors, but the fires were well characterized (atmospheric temperatures measured) and the structural performance well documented. The other two buildings had building contents fires that were not suppressed initially by sprinklers and grew to involve multiple floors before they were extinguished.

### 8.5.1 One Meridian Plaza

At approximately 8:30 p.m., February 23, 1991, a fire was reported at One Meridian Plaza, a 38 story office building in Philadelphia (Figure 8–9). The fire, which started on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor, ultimately consumed the 21<sup>st</sup> through 29<sup>th</sup> floors. Fire fighting operations were suspended when it was determined that there was a possibility of a major structural collapse; the fire was extinguished only when it reached the 30<sup>th</sup> floor, which had a functioning automatic sprinkler system. Information regarding this fire, taken largely from Eisner and Manning (1991), Klem (1991), and Routley et al. (1991), is summarized here.



Source: Michael Wirtz/Philadelphia Inquirer, used with permission

**Figure 8–9. One Meridian Plaza fire, Philadelphia, 1991.**

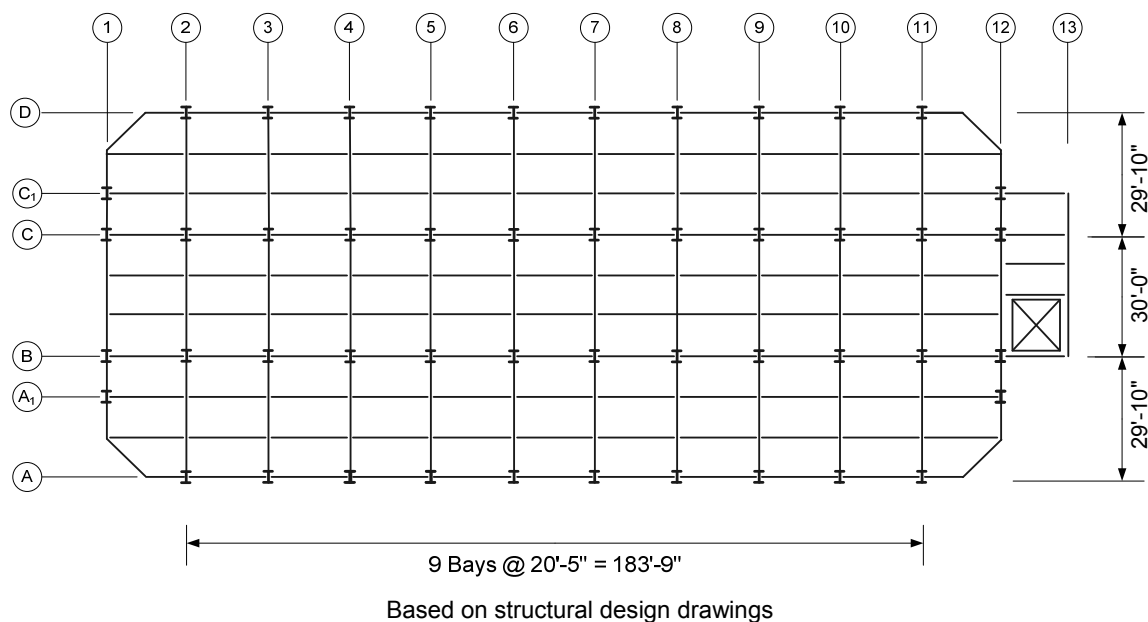
## The Building

The One Meridian Plaza office building was designed and built to the 1949 Philadelphia Building Code and was completed in 1969. It was classified as “Type 1B” construction requiring 3 h fire-rated columns, and 2 h fire-rated beams. The building was steel frame construction with non-composite concrete slab floors over metal deck. It was moment frame construction with all girder-to-column connections moment resisting, i.e., what would today be termed “fully restrained.” Beams were protected with cementitious sprayed fire-resistive material (SFRM), and the columns were encased in plaster and gypsum. Columns were reported to have a 4 h fire resistance rating, which exceeded the 3 h code requirement.

The building was approximately 68 m by 29 m (223 ft by 94 ft) in plan and had an open-plan floor layout with offices around the periphery (Figure 8–10). There was a service core located on the south side of the building leaving roughly 1,600 m<sup>2</sup> (17,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) of tenant space per floor. The 22<sup>nd</sup> floor, where the fire started, had a “convenience stairway” to the 21<sup>st</sup> floor which was open (i.e., not separated by fire-rated partitions and doors). There was a similar stairway connecting the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> floors, allowing for easy vertical fire spread.

## Fire Protection Systems

An automatic sprinkler system was being installed in the building, and tenant floors would have been sprinklered as they became vacant or were renovated. At the time of the fire, sprinklers had been installed on Floors 30, 31, 34, and 35, and parts of Floors 11 and 15, with installation scheduled for completion by 1993. There were three stairways, two served by 6 in. “wet” risers. Pressure-regulating valves on Floors 13 through 25 had not been properly calibrated on installation and initially limited available water for fire fighting operations.



**Figure 8–10. Floor framing plan for One Meridian Plaza.**



## Combustible Load

The building tenants were law offices, and brokerage, banking and accounting firms. The fire load was characterized as “heavy” in the USFA Technical Report (Routley 1991) with “heavy wood paneling, heavy wood furniture, and an abundance of office machinery.”

## Growth and Spread of Fire

The fire was determined by the Fire Marshal of the City of Philadelphia (Eisner and Manning 1991) to have started by spontaneous heating resulting in the ignition of oily rags left in an office where refinishing work on the wood paneling was being done. The fire was first detected by a smoke alarm that activated at approximately 8:23 p.m. The Philadelphia Fire department was notified at 8:27 p.m. and the first unit arrived within 4 min, at which time heavy smoke was reported, with fire observed from one window on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor.

The fire on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor spread to the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor. It was reported that “Vertical fire extension resulted from unprotected openings in floor and shaft assemblies, failure of fire-resistance rated floor assemblies, and the lapping of flames through windows on the outside of the building” (Routley et al. 1991). Fire fighting efforts were severely hampered by low pressure in the standpipe water supply system and loss of electrical power, allowing uncontrolled fires to continue to spread vertically.

About six hours after the fire started, at 2:15 a.m. the next day, “fire was reported to be burning on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> floors and extending to the 26<sup>th</sup> floor” (Routley et al. 1991). Thus, fires were burning simultaneously on at least two floors at a time, and the vertical fire spread rate was approximately 90 min per floor. Fire fighters reported (Eisner and Manning 1991),

“...continual movement and cracking [of concrete] in all three [stair] towers. Floors had moved as much as three feet...and beam flanges were cracked. SFRM on beams in stairways had fallen off and the now-unprotected members were twisting, moving, and starting to elongate. Main structural elements were beginning to fail.”

A structural engineer advised the fire department of the potential for structural collapse, and a decision was made to pull back firefighters. The order to evacuate the building was issued at about 7:00 a.m. on February 24. Fire continued to spread vertically until, at the 30<sup>th</sup> floor, it was stopped by automatic sprinklers.

## Structural Fire Damage

The USFA report (Routley et al. 1991) indicated that, “After the fire, there was evident significant structural damage to horizontal steel members and floor sections on most of the fire damaged floors. Beams and girders sagged and twisted—some as much as three feet—under severe fire exposures, and fissures developed in the reinforced concrete floor assemblies in many places.” It was reported that the columns continued to support their loads without obvious damage. The Philadelphia Fire Commissioner later commented that, “vertical member protection was a major factor in preventing a total collapse of upper floors” (Eisner and Manning 1991). Recall that the fire protection for the columns was reported to exceed the code requirements.

### 8.5.2 First Interstate Bank Building

On May 4, 1988, fire broke out in the First Interstate Bank Building in downtown Los Angeles, burning out four floors and damaging a fifth (Figure 8–11). Fire originated on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor and was believed to have been caused by an electrical problem, although the source of ignition was never determined (Routley 1988). The fire was eventually controlled by the Los Angeles City Fire Department that had summoned 64 companies, totaling 383 firefighters and support personnel. Information regarding this fire has been reported in United States Fire Administration Technical Report USFA-TR-022 (Routley 1988) and in (Nelson 1989) and is summarized here.



[Los Angeles Times Photo by Boris Yaro], used with permission

**Figure 8–11. First Interstate Bank fire, Los Angeles, 1988.**

## The Building

The 62 floor office building, completed in 1973, was a steel moment frame structure with lightweight composite concrete floors over metal deck. The steel was protected with sprayed fire-resistive material. The building had a floor plan measuring 38 m by 68 m (124 ft by 184 ft), a central core, and approximately 1,600 m<sup>2</sup> (17,500 ft<sup>3</sup>) of office space per floor. The tenant space was largely open-plan office space.

An automatic sprinkler system was being installed at the time of the fire. Installation was about 90 percent complete and included piping and sprinkler heads on the five fire floors (Floors 12 through 16). Valves controlling the system, however, had been closed until installation of water flow alarms was to be completed. The building was served by a standpipe system with four risers—one on each stairway—providing water for fire fighting operations. While it was determined that activating the automatic sprinkler system on the fire floors would overwhelm the system and, thereby, limit the available water for fire fighting operations, the sprinklers on Floors 17 through 19 were activated in the event that fire extended above the 16<sup>th</sup> floor.

## Combustible Load

The building was occupied by the headquarters of the bank corporation, with several floors occupied by other tenants. The 12<sup>th</sup> floor, where the fire was believed to have started in the open-plan office area, had modular furniture with personal computers and terminals, typical of those used in securities exchange activities.

## Growth and Spread of Fire

A smoke detector on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor was activated at 10:30 p.m., and the first alarm was called in at 10:37 p.m. The first fire company arrived on the scene at 10:41 p.m., at which time the Battalion Chief indicated “the entire east side and three-fourths of the south side of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor [were] fully involved with fire” (Routley 1989).

The fire spread vertically, mostly as flames extended 30 ft up the face of the building and through the space between the floor and glass curtain wall. Additionally, some extension was reported as occurring through floor penetrations, ventilation shafts and by conduction through the slabs (Routley 1988). The fire was eventually brought under control by the fire department at about 2:19 a.m., nearly 4 h after smoke was first detected at 10:30 p.m. the previous night.

The USFA report (Routley 1988) indicated that:

“The fire extended at a rate estimated at 45 minutes per floor and burned intensely for approximately 90 minutes on each level. This resulted in two floors being heavily involved at any point during the fire.”

### Structural Fire Damage

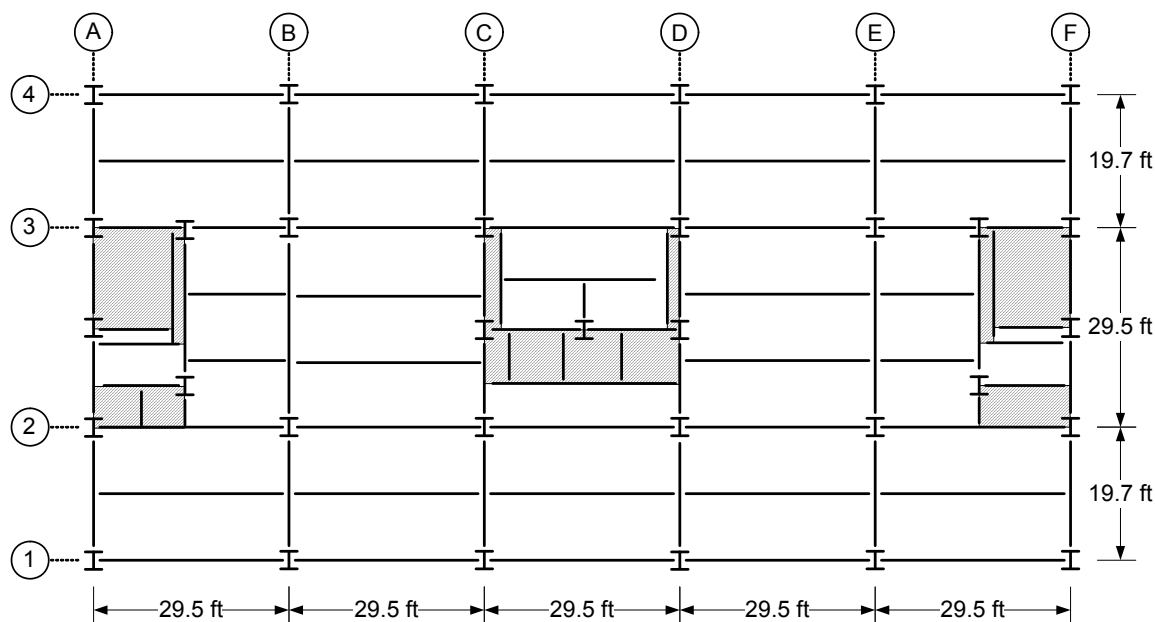
According to the United States Fire Administration (Routley 1988), “in spite of the total burnout of four and a half floors, there was no damage to the main structural members and only minor damage to one secondary beam and a small number of floor pans. ... It was noted that quality control in the application of the sprayed-on fire protection was unusually good.”

#### 8.5.3 Multi-Story Test Building at Cardington (Test No. 6)

An eight story test building was constructed by the British Research Establishment (BRE) at its Cardington Laboratory for the purpose of conducting a series of fire tests. The steel-framed building was designed and constructed to represent a typical office building, and was completed in 1993. A series of seven tests were conducted, two of which are discussed in this section. Information regarding the various fire tests at the Cardington facility has been reported (British Steel 1999). Here, Test No. 3 is referenced in qualitative terms, and Test No. 6 is compared with the One Meridian, First Interstate Bank and WTC 7 fires.

#### The Building

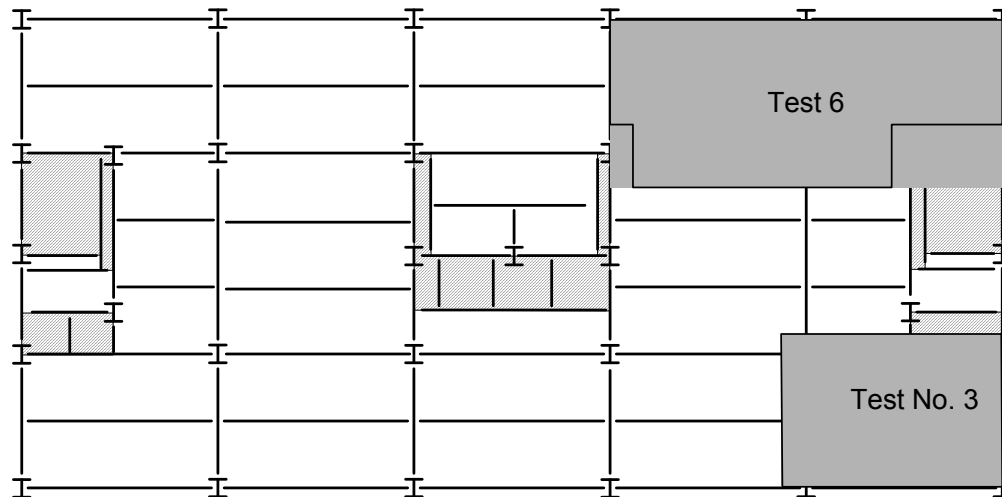
The test building was rectangular in plan measuring approximately 21m by 45 m (69 ft by 148 ft) for a total floor area of 88 m<sup>2</sup> (9500 ft<sup>2</sup>) excluding the service core areas. There were five equally spaced bays along the length at 9.0 m (29.5 ft) each, and bays of 6.6 m, 9.0 m, and 6.0 m (19.7 ft, 29.5 ft, and 19.7 ft) across the width (Figure 8–12). The building was 8 stories high, for a total height of 33 m (108 ft).



Reproduced from British Steel 1999

**Figure 8–12. Floor plan of Cardington test building.**

Test No. 6 (Simulated Office Test) was designed to investigate the behavior of a fire covering a large floor area fueled by typical office furnishings to produce a severe fire. It involved a test area of 135 m<sup>2</sup> (1,450 ft<sup>2</sup>), as shown in Figure 8–13. Because it represented a large (although single floor) fire and realistic fuel load, results of Test No. 6 were used in the comparison below. Test No. 3 (1<sup>st</sup> Corner) is also of qualitative interest. This test was designed to investigate a single bay of the floor system under a severe fire, and involved a test area of 76 m<sup>2</sup> (820 ft<sup>2</sup>), as shown in Figure 8–13. Results of this test were used to illustrate qualitatively the effect of floor framing configuration on the behavior of floor beams and their connections to girders (Section 8.7).



Reproduced from British Steel 1999

**Figure 8–13. Test areas for Test No. 3 and Test No. 6.**

### Combustible Load

Test No. 6 involved an open-plan compartment that contained work stations consisting of modern day furnishings, computers and filing systems. The total combustible loading was equivalent to 46 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (9.2 lb/ft<sup>2</sup>).

### Growth and Spread of Fire

Test conditions (quantity and make-up of combustibles, ventilation, etc.) were designed to create the most severe fire possible. Within 10 minutes of ignition, hot gas temperatures exceeded 900 °C and reached a maximum of just over 1200 °C within 40 min. At its maximum, the heat release rate was calculated to be 58 MW. Complete burnout, including contents of the filing cabinets, was achieved.

### Structural Fire Damage

No structural failures were reported in Test No. 6, but the maximum floor sag was reported to be 25 in. (640 mm) in a span of 9 m (29.5 ft). In Test No. 3, where the maximum compartment temperatures was approximately 960 °C (1760 °C), the maximum floor beam deflection was 428 mm (16.8 in.), also in a span of 9 m (29.5 ft).

#### 8.5.4 Other Structural Failures in Fire

Structural damage due to fire has been reported for several other steel frame office buildings in the last few decades. Two instances are mentioned here: the One New York Plaza fire that occurred in 1970, and the fire and partial collapse of World Trade Center 5 on September 11, 2001.

##### One New York Plaza

On August 5, 1970, fire broke out on the 33<sup>rd</sup> floor of One New York Plaza, a 50 story office building in New York City (Powers 1970). Fire spread to the 34<sup>th</sup> floor and then to the 35<sup>th</sup> floor. Damage to the structural steel was reported on the 33<sup>rd</sup> 34<sup>th</sup> floors. The official report on the fire, conducted by The New York Board of Fire Underwriters (Powers 1970), stated,

“Steel beams in the south corner and west center section of the 33<sup>rd</sup> floor were twisted or deflected several inches and the connecting bolts sheared off or failed allowing the beams in some sections to rest on the flange of the girder.”

“Beams [on the 34<sup>th</sup> floor] were severely deflected and distorted and the most severe structural damage occurred in the west section of this floor.”

While there were no floor collapses in this case, there were connection failures, and deflection and distortion of floor beams.

##### World Trade Center 5

The World Trade Center Building 5 (WTC 5) was a 9 story office building located on the north side of the World Trade Center Plaza. The collapse of WTC 1 caused damage to WTC 5 and started fires in it (McAllister 2002). The uncontrolled fires resulted in complete burnout of most floors and partial collapse of four floors. The building was steel frame construction with field-bolted connections between floor beams and column tree assemblies. Failure of large sections of floor, in areas not damaged by falling debris from WTC 1, resulted from bolt tear-out at these connections as a result of the uncontrolled fires (Figure 8–14). Photographs of two recovered samples of floor beams (Figure 8–15) show how the field bolts tore out from the beam web weakened by the fires (McAllister 2002).



NIST photograph

**Figure 8–14. Tear-out of beam web due to uncontrolled fires.**



Source: McAllister 2002

**Figure 8–15. Steel samples recovered from WTC 5, showing tear-out of beam web.**

### 8.5.5 Comparisons Among Building Fires

Information provided in the above summaries, extracted from the USFA Technical Reports and documentation of the BRE Cardington Tests, is summarized here.

**Table 8–1. Comparison of building fires.**

	<b>First Interstate Bank Building</b>	<b>One Meridian Plaza</b>	<b>Cardington Test No. 6</b>	<b>WTC 7</b>
<b>Building</b>				
Year Built	1973	1969	1993	1987
Occupancy	office	office	office	office
Number of Stories	62	38	8	47
Plan Dimensions (ft)	124 x 184	94 x 223	69 x 148	144 x 329 <sup>a</sup>
Floor Area - excluding service core (ft <sup>2</sup> )	17,500	17,000	1450 <sup>b</sup>	31,250
Floor Layout	open	Open w/ offices on periphery	open	open
<b>Construction</b>				
Steel Structure	Moment-Resisting Space Frame	Moment-Resisting Space Frame	Braced Frame	Exterior Moment Frame, Unbraced Core
Floor Framing	Regular grid	Regular grid	Regular grid	Asymmetric
Bay spacing (ft) (approx.)	30 x 30	20 x 30	20 x 30	44 x 52 <sup>c</sup>
Floor Slab	Lightweight concrete on metal deck	Concrete on metal deck <sup>d</sup>	Lightweight concrete on metal deck	Concrete on metal deck
Primary Beams	composite	Non-composite	composite	Non-composite
Secondary Beams	composite	Non-composite	composite	composite
Floor Framing Connections				
Beam-to-Column	Fully restrained moment	Fully restrained moment	Simple (end-plate)	Simple (double angle or seat)
Beam-to-Girders	Unknown	simple	Simple (fin plate)	Simple (fin plate, double angle, or seat)
<b>Fire Protection (hourly rating)</b>				
Columns	3 h	4 h	1 ½ <sup>e</sup>	3 h
Primary Beams	2 h	2 h	none	2 h
Secondary Beams	2 h	2 h	none	2 h
<b>Fire Conditions</b>				
Duration of Fire (hours)	4	18	1	5
No. of Fire Floors	5	9	1	6
Max atmosphere (gas) temp	Unknown	Unknown	1213 °C	1100 °C <sup>f</sup>
<b>Structural Performance</b>				
Max steel temperature	Unknown	Unknown	1150 °C <sup>g</sup>	740 °C
Structural Damage	no	yes	yes	yes
Max vertical displacement of floor beams (in)	N/A	36	25	N/A
Floor Collapse	no	no	no	yes

N/A means not applicable

a Overall plan dimensions

b The building floor area was 9500 ft<sup>2</sup> but the compartment tested was approximately 1450 ft<sup>2</sup>

c Represents largest spans (in NE corner)

d May be lightweight concrete but USFA report indicates only “concrete”

e British Code requirement – 1 in. ceramic fiber blanket was used on columns

f Estimated using fire simulation models (Chapter 9) and measured in office furnishing burn tests (NCSTAR 1-5E)

g Unprotected steel



First Interstate Bank and One Meridian Plaza, both commercial buildings, had fires that fully involved entire floors. In both buildings, vertical spread of fire was by external flame exposure, breaking glass windows from the outside and igniting office furnishings in the floor above. By contrast, the fires in WTC 7 spread across several floors, but did not involve an entire floor at any given time. Additionally, in WTC 7 there was no floor-to-floor fire spread as evidenced by photographic and videographic records. Finally, the combustible load was likely similar in First Interstate Bank, One Meridian Plaza, and WTC 7, with the combustible load in One Meridian Plaza perhaps even greater as it was described subjectively as “heavy.” NIST therefore concluded that the fires in First Interstate Bank and One Meridian Plaza were at least as severe, and probably more severe, than the fires in WTC 7.

The maximum atmospheric temperature for large, open-floor plan burning of office furnishings is approximately 1200 °C (2200 °F), as measured in Cardington Test No. 6. Note that Cardington Test No. 3, which was also characterized as a severe fire, produced maximum gas temperatures of approximately 1000 °C (1800 °F). These maximum temperatures were consistent with the maximum gas temperatures of 1100 °C (2000 °F) determined by fire simulations and measured experimentally for fires of workstations similar to those in WTC 7 (NIST NCSTAR 1-5E).

If the fires in First Interstate Bank, One Meridian Plaza, the Cardington Test Building and WTC 7 generated comparable atmospheric temperatures, and of the four buildings cited only the WTC 7 building collapsed, the reason for the different outcomes likely lay in differences in the structural systems and the details of how the steel frames were constructed. Although all four buildings have been described as “steel frame structures,” comparison of construction features between the three buildings that did not collapse in an uncontrolled fire and WTC 7 revealed the following differences:

- Simple framing connections for girders in WTC 7 vs. fully restrained moment connections of girders-to-columns in the other three structures;
- Floor beam spans up to 16 m (52 ft) in WTC 7, rather than a maximum of 9 m (30 ft) in the other structures;
- Asymmetric framing in WTC 7 rather than regular floor framing (providing one-sided lateral support to girders) in the other three structures,
- Non-composite girders in WTC 7 rather than composite girders (presence or absence of shear studs) in the other three structures; and
- Seated connections used for girder-to-column connections in WTC 7; NIST found no evidence that such connections were used in the other structures.

The implications of these differences are discussed in the following section.

## **8.6 STRUCTURAL FRAMING OF WTC 7**

The exterior of WTC 7 was a moment frame with relatively closely spaced columns. The core structure was simply connected and derived its lateral support from the moment frame through diaphragm action of the floor slabs. Simply-connected floor beams and girders spanned between the exterior moment frame and the core. Where the spans between the exterior and core were large, intermediate columns, designed

to carry gravity loads only with connections that were not intended to provide resistance to lateral loads, were used.

The floor framing layout was somewhat unique due, in part, to the unusual trapezoidal shape of the building, but also to the need to match existing column layout in the Con Edison substation (Chapter 2). The result was that, in some locations, floor beams framed into girders on only one side of the girder, denoted in Table 8–1 as “asymmetric” floor framing. The use of single shear plates and double angles is typical for steel floor framing connections. Seated connections, though generally less common, are nevertheless found in high-rise construction and have advantages during steel erection.

In general, the concrete slab and metal deck are considered to provide continuous lateral support of the compression flange (top flange) of the floor beams and girders thereby providing bracing against lateral-torsional buckling. Welding of the metal deck to the flanges of the supporting beams and the use of shear studs to provide composite action with the concrete floor generally achieve the required bracing.

Except for the moment frame exterior, simple framing connections using high strength bolts were used. These connections were either shear connections using a single shear plate or double angles, or seated connections. See Chapter 2 for a description of the floor framing connections.

## 8.7 IMPLICATIONS OF STRUCTURAL FRAMING DETAILS IN WTC 7

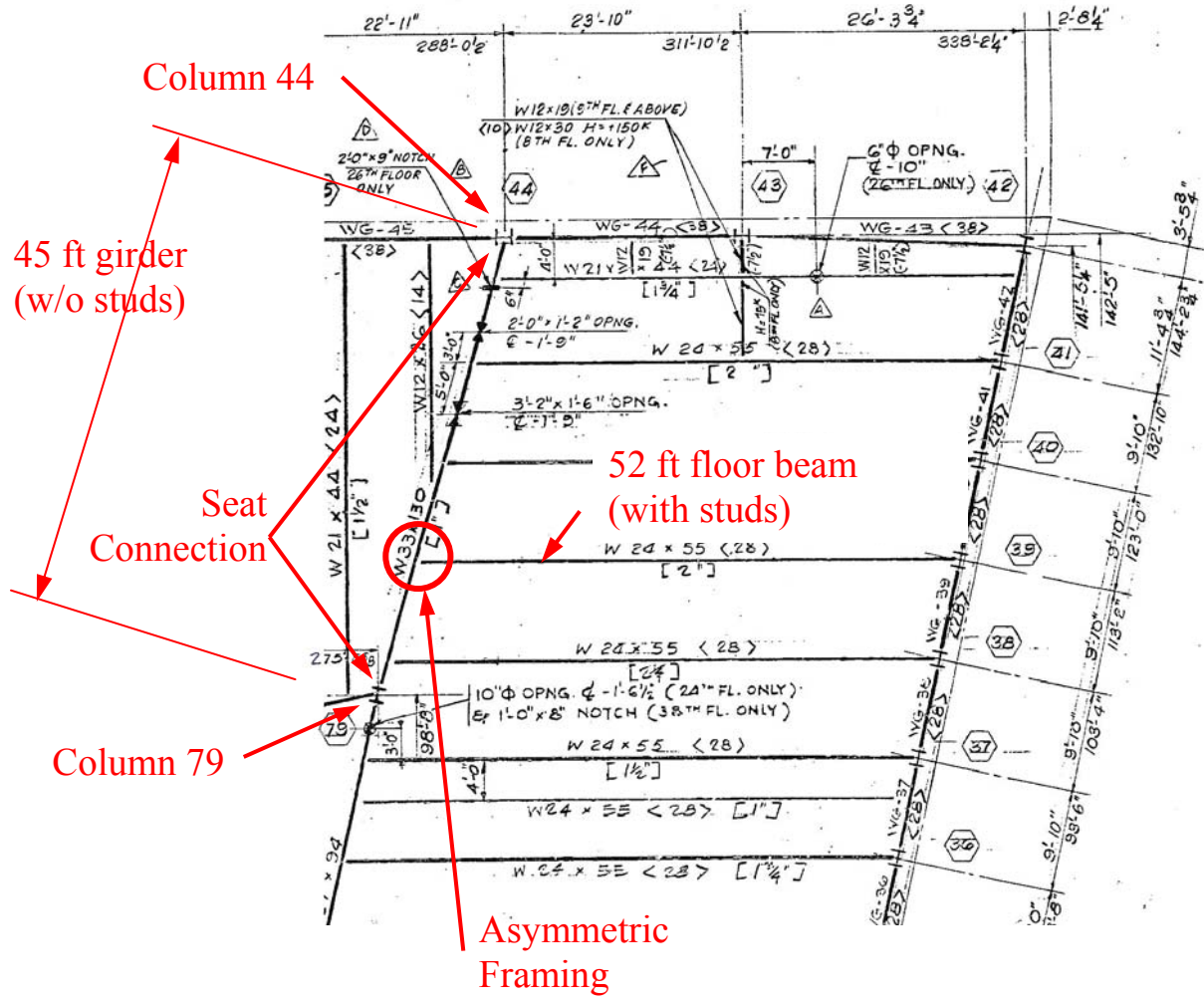
Figure 8–16 is a partial floor framing plan of the northeast corner of WTC 7<sup>1</sup>, which contains interior Column 79, a 13.7 m (45 ft) long girder (W33x130) framing between Column 79 and Column 44 without shear studs<sup>2</sup>, seat connections at both ends of this girder, and 15.8 m (52 ft) floor beams with shear studs that frame into the girder from only one side (the east side). The northeast corner framing of a typical tenant floor was used to explore the implications of various construction features (details) of interest.

### 8.7.1 Fully Restrained Moment Connections for Girders

Two of the high-rise buildings that did not collapse in uncontrolled fires (First Interstate Bank and One Meridian Plaza) had moment frames, wherein fully restrained moment connections were used to connect all girders to the columns. Moment connections are considerably more robust than simple connections as they connect the beam flanges as well as the web to the column. Thus, column failure by loss of lateral support due to failure of primary beams (as discussed previously) is less likely. In contrast, WTC 7 had a “gravity frame” for the core above Floor 7, which used simple connections to connect the floor beams to the girders and girders to the columns. Single shear plate (or fin plate) connections and seated connections, in particular, (as described above) are more vulnerable to the effects of fire than moment connections, as discussed below. The behavior in fire of a simply connected floor system is further affected by long spans, the absence of shear studs, and asymmetric floor framing. These aspects are addressed below. Note that the Cardington building used simple floor framing connections but had fire on only one floor, not multiple floors, and had considerably shorter spans.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Erection Drawings, Sheet E12/13, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Framing Plan.

<sup>2</sup> The number of shear studs on a floor beam is indicated on erection drawings between brackets “{...}” as shown in Based on erection drawing of Floors 12/13 (Frankel Steel 1985) Figure 8–16.



Based on erection drawing of Floors 12/13 (Frankel Steel 1985)

Figure 8-16. Partial floor framing plan showing northeast corner.

### 8.7.2 Long Span Beams and Girders

As a steel beam or girder is heated by a fire, it undergoes thermal expansion and elongates in proportion to its length and the temperature increase. With no restraint to thermal expansion, the change in length due to uniform heating,  $\delta_T$ , is computed as

$$\delta_T = \alpha \Delta T L \tag{1}$$

where

$\alpha$  is the coefficient of thermal expansion ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ )<sup>-1</sup>

$\Delta T$  is the increase in temperature,  $^{\circ}\text{C}$

$L$  is the length of the member (in.)

For example, if a 13.7 m (540 in.) long girder is heated so as to uniformly increase its temperature by 600 °C, and the coefficient of thermal expansion is taken to be  $1.4 \times 10^{-5} / ^\circ\text{C}$ , the elongation would be,

$$\delta_T = (1.4 \times 10^{-5} / ^\circ\text{C}) \times (600 ^\circ\text{C}) \times (540 \text{ in.}) = 4.5 \text{ in.}$$

Often this free thermal expansion is resisted by the steel structure that the beam or girder frames into, or by attachment to the concrete floor slab that it supports. The force required to resist completely the free thermal expansion (elongation) of a beam or girder,  $Q_{\Delta T}$ , is given by

$$Q_{\Delta T} = A E(T) \alpha \Delta T \quad (2)$$

where

$A$  is the cross sectional area of the beam or girder ( $\text{in.}^2$ )

$E(T)$  is the modulus of elasticity at temperature,  $T$  (ksi)

The temperature-dependent modulus of elasticity can be computed as (see NCSTAR 1-3D),

$$E(T) = 145 \times (206 - 4.3 \times 10^{-2} T - 3.5 \times 10^{-5} T^2 - 6.6 \times 10^{-8} T^3)$$

Assume a steel beam or girder heats up to 600 °C. The modulus of elasticity by the above equation would be approximately 22,000 ksi, or roughly 75 percent of its room temperature value of 30,000 ksi.

Consider again a 13.7 m (540 in.) long W33x130 girder that is heated uniformly to 600 °C. Substituting  $A=38.3 \text{ in.}^2$ ,  $E(T)=22,235 \text{ ksi}$ ,  $\alpha=1.4 \times 10^{-5} / ^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $\Delta T=580 ^\circ\text{C}$  (600 °C - 20 °C), one obtains a force of

$$Q_{\Delta T} = (38.3 \text{ in.}^2) \times (22,235 \text{ ksi}) \times (1.4 \times 10^{-5} / ^\circ\text{C}) \times (580 ^\circ\text{C}) \cong 6900 \text{ kip.}$$

If, for example, this force to resist free thermal expansion could be developed, the axial stress in the member would be  $6900 \text{ kip} / 38.3 \text{ in.}^2 = 180 \text{ ksi}$  which greatly exceeds the yield strength of the steel used (approximately 50 ksi). Alternatively, consider the case in which this 6900 kip force is exerted on a bolted connection. Since the single shear capacity of a one bolt is approximately 45 kip (Section 11.2.4), it is clear that the force exerted by the expanding girder far exceeds the capacity of, e.g., four bolts found in a seated connection which together have a shear capacity at room temperature of roughly 180 kip.

These two aspects, (1) the magnitude of elongation due to free-thermal expansion, and (2) force required to resist this elongation, will be shown to be of importance in the following discussions. These two aspects are of particular importance for long members and for the heavy sections required for long spans.

### 8.7.3 Asymmetrical Framing of Floor Beams into Girders

In all three buildings, One Meridian Plaza, First Interstate Bank, and the Cardington Test Building, in which large uncontrolled fires did not lead to local or global collapse, the floor framing formed a rectangular grid and, except at the building's exterior, floor beams framed into both sides of the girders or columns. (See, for example, the floor framing of the Cardington Test Building in Figure 8–12.) Behavior of the floor beam and girder is influenced by the end restraint conditions under fire exposure. For example, Cardington Test No. 3 exposed one bay to a wood crib fire resulting in gas temperatures that

reached almost 1000 °C. The floor beam in this test framed into a girder on column line E, and into a spandrel beam on the building exterior on column line F (Figure 8–17). Thermal expansion of the floor beam framing into the girder on column line E was resisted by a floor beam framing from the opposite side (the floor beam spanning between column lines D and E), resulting in forces sufficient to buckle the bottom flange. The top flange of the beam did not buckle, since both the primary and secondary beams were tied to the slab using shear studs.

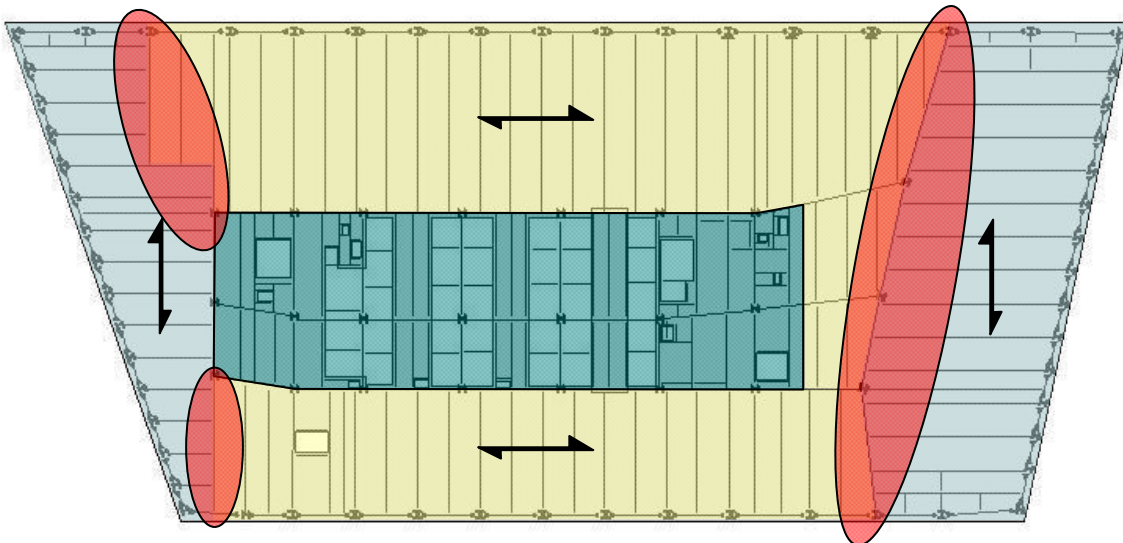


Source: British Steel 1999

**Figure 8–17. Floor beam buckling at symmetrical framing to girder.**

Floor beams framed into only one side of a girder in several locations in WTC 7, as shown in the highlighted areas in Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

Figure 8–18. (Arrows indicate directions that the metal deck spanned.) Of particular interest was the northeast corner of the building. The relevance of this framing condition in concert with the presence (or absence) of shear studs, and the use of seated connections under the effect of fire-induced thermal expansion is covered next.

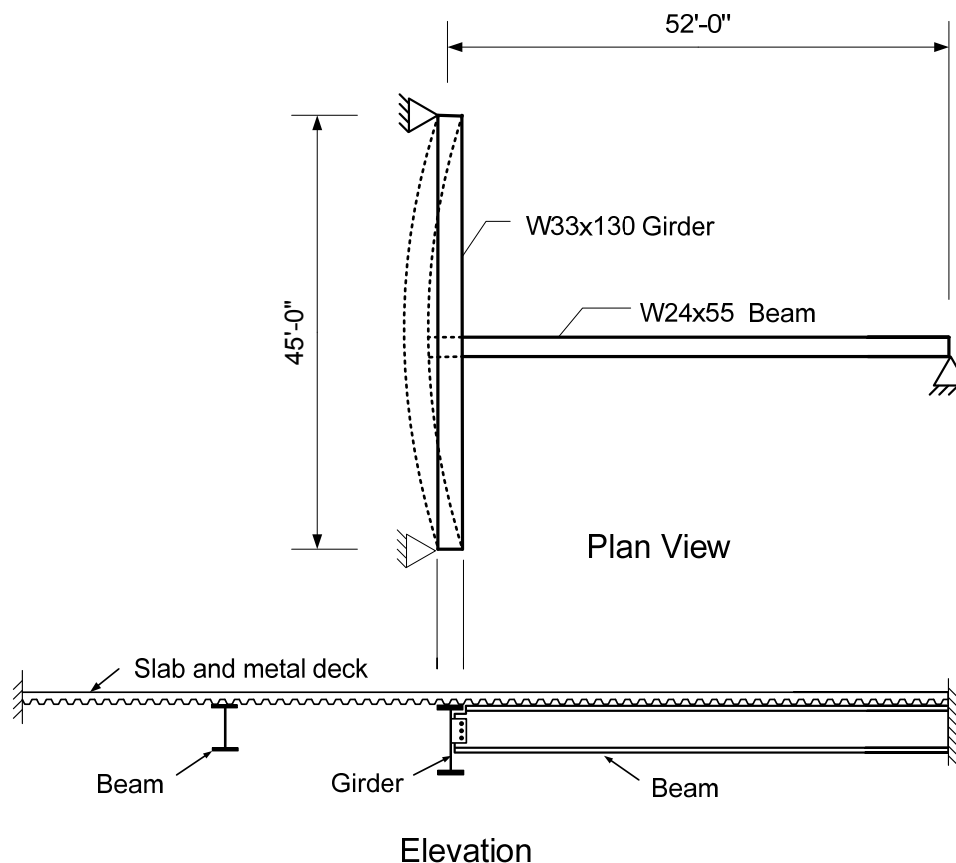


Based on structural design drawings (Cantor 1985)

**Figure 8–18. Floor framing where beams frame into only one side of the girder.**

### 8.7.4 Absence of Shear Studs on Girders

In WTC 7, no studs were installed on the girders (Cantor 1985). Thus, in those locations where there were no opposing beams, resistance to the thermal expansion of the floor beams would have been provided primarily by the lateral stiffness of the girder (neglecting the minor contribution of the puddle welds attaching the metal deck to the girder).



**Figure 8–19. Thermal expansion of floor beams**

Consider a simplified floor beam-to-girder arrangement as found in the northeast corner of WTC 7 (Figure 8–19). The displacement of the connection between the floor beam and girder is a function of the lateral stiffness of the girder and the axial stiffness of the floor beam, and is given by,

$$u_x = \frac{-AE\alpha\Delta T}{\frac{AE}{L_1} + \frac{48EI_y}{L_2^3}} \quad (3)$$

where  $A$  = cross sectional area of floor beam  
 $E$  = modulus of elasticity  
 $\alpha$  = coefficient of thermal expansion  
 $\Delta T$  = temperature increase of floor beam  
 $I_y$  = moment of inertia of girder weak-axis

$$\begin{aligned} L_1 &= \text{length of floor beam} \\ L_2 &= \text{length of girder} \end{aligned}$$

The ratio of the lateral stiffness of the girder to the axial stiffness of the beam (ratio of the second term in the denominator to the first term) is

$$\frac{\frac{48EI_y}{L_2^3}}{\frac{AE}{L_1}} = \frac{48I_y L_1}{AL_2^3} \quad (4)$$

Substituting  $A=16.2 \text{ in.}^2$ ,  $I_y = 218 \text{ in.}^4$ ,  $L_1 = 52 \text{ ft} = 624 \text{ in.}$ , and  $L_2 = 45 \text{ ft} = 540 \text{ in.}$ , one finds that this ratio was approximately  $2.6 \times 10^{-3}$ , or, in other words, the lateral stiffness of the girder was about three orders of magnitude smaller than the axial stiffness of the floor beam. Thus, in this simplified example, the girder provided almost no lateral resistance to the free thermal expansion of the floor beam.

Now consider the force carried by the shear studs attaching the floor beam to the floor slab when there was little or no lateral resistance provided by the girder. If the floor beam was heated due to fire exposure, its tendency would have been to elongate by the amount,  $\alpha \Delta T L_1$  where the terms are described above. Resistance to this free thermal expansion would have been provided only by the shear studs, if the lateral stiffness of the girder were neglected as illustrated above. The force on a single stud on the floor beam due to thermal elongation is

$$Q_s = \frac{AE(T)\alpha\Delta T}{n}, \quad (5)$$

where  $n$  is the number of shear studs along the beam and the other terms are as defined above noting that the modulus of elasticity is a function of the temperature,  $T$ .

Assume that the steel heated to  $600 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ .  $E(600 \text{ }^\circ\text{C})$  is approximately 22,000 ksi (Figure 3-3 in NCSTAR 1-6C). Substituting  $A=16.2 \text{ in.}^2$  (W24x55),  $E(T)=22,000 \text{ ksi}$ ,  $\alpha=1.4 \times 10^{-5}/^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $\Delta T=600 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ , and  $n=22$  (number of shear studs on the W24x55 floor beam in the northwest corner), one obtains,

$$Q_s = \frac{(16.2) \times (22000) \times (1.4 \times 10^{-5}) \times (600)}{22} \cong 135 \text{ kips} \quad (6)$$

The nominal capacity of a  $\frac{3}{4}$  in stud is roughly 20 kip at room temperature; thus, one would expect that, when a floor beam is not restrained from thermally expanding, while the floor slab to which it is attached with shear studs is restrained due to its in-plane stiffness, the shear studs will fail and the floor beam will have little resistance to thermal expansion or to lateral-torsional buckling.

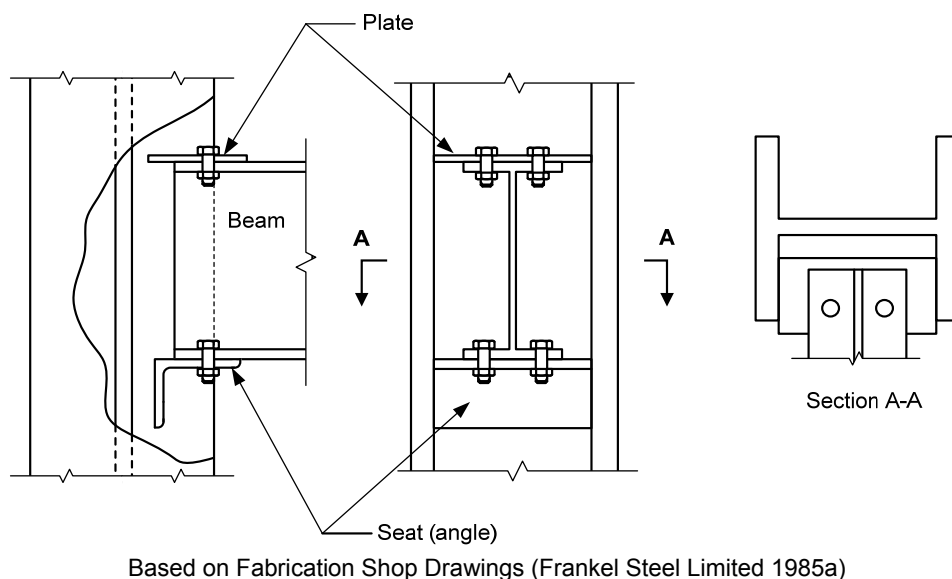
In those locations where there is asymmetric framing of the floor beams into the girders, an absence of shear studs on the girders combined with the failure of shear studs on the floor beams, leads to a floor system which has little restraint to free thermal expansion and little resistance to lateral-torsional buckling.

### 8.7.5 Seats Used for Floor System Connections

Floor beams and girders that framed into exterior columns, and in some instances, girders that framed into interior columns, had seated connections. For example, the girder that framed between interior Column 79 and exterior Column 44 had such connections at both ends.

Seat connections to exterior columns where the floor beam framing was perpendicular to the exterior moment frame were as shown in Figure 8–20. Where the floor beam framed into an exterior column at a skew angle, the seat angle was replaced by a plate. Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel 1985)

Figure 8–21 shows the seat connection at Column 79 that supported the girder spanning to Column 44 on the exterior. Note that details of the connections of the other two girders that framed into Column 79 are not shown.



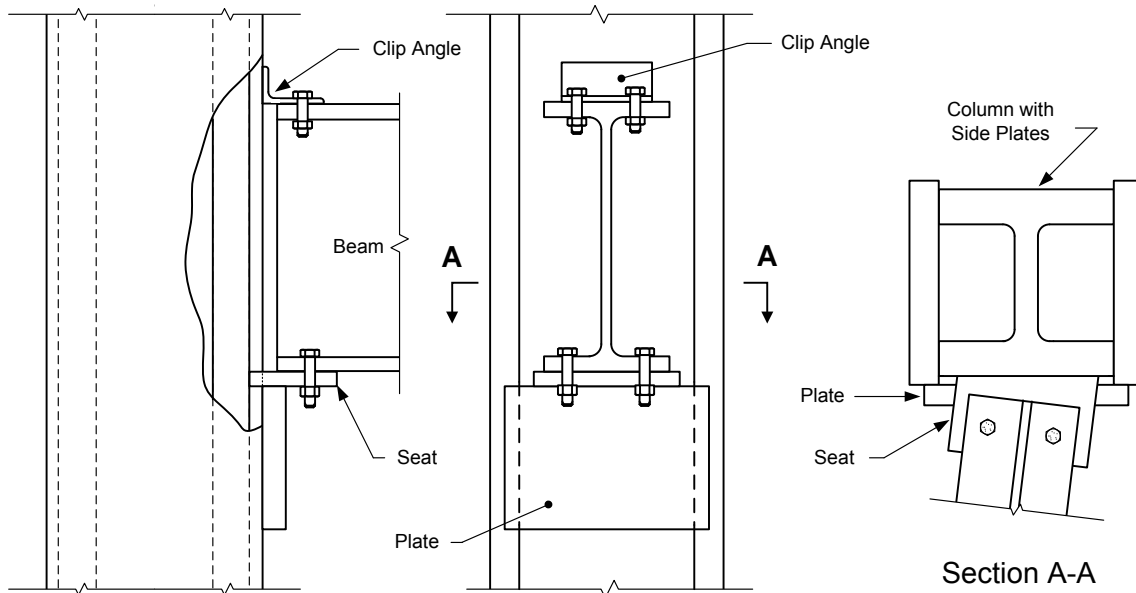
**Figure 8–20. Seat connection at exterior column on the north face.**

In a seated connection, the beam or girder was supported by the seat through its attachment, generally by welds, to the column. Bolts were installed that fasten the beam or girder to the seat for erection purposes. These erection bolts did not carry any gravity load; rather, they were installed to insure that the beam or girder was held in place during erection. NIST found no evidence that the girders or beams in WTC 7 were welded to the seats. In a similar way, an angle or plate was bolted to the top flange to prevent the beam or girder from twisting, while providing little restraint to bending in the plane of the beam.

Consider the girder that spans between Column 79 on the interior of the building and Column 44 on the exterior. Thermal expansion of this girder would have loaded the erection bolts in shear, since (1) there were no shear studs anchoring the girder to the slab (and thereby restraining elongation), and (2) the columns to which the beam or girder frames were prevented from movement because they were embedded in the floor slabs which had considerable in-plane stiffness. Additionally, the expansion of floor beams that framed into this girder, because the framing is asymmetrical, tended to load the erection bolts in shear as well. The combination of these two shear loads could have failed the bolts in shear. If



the erection bolts were to fail, then there would be no positive attachment preventing the girder from being pushed off the seat.



Based on fabrication shop drawings (Frankel Steel 1985)

**Figure 8–21. Seat connection at Column 79.**

## 8.8 FINITE ELEMENT ANALYSIS OF THE NORTHEAST FLOOR FRAMING SYSTEM

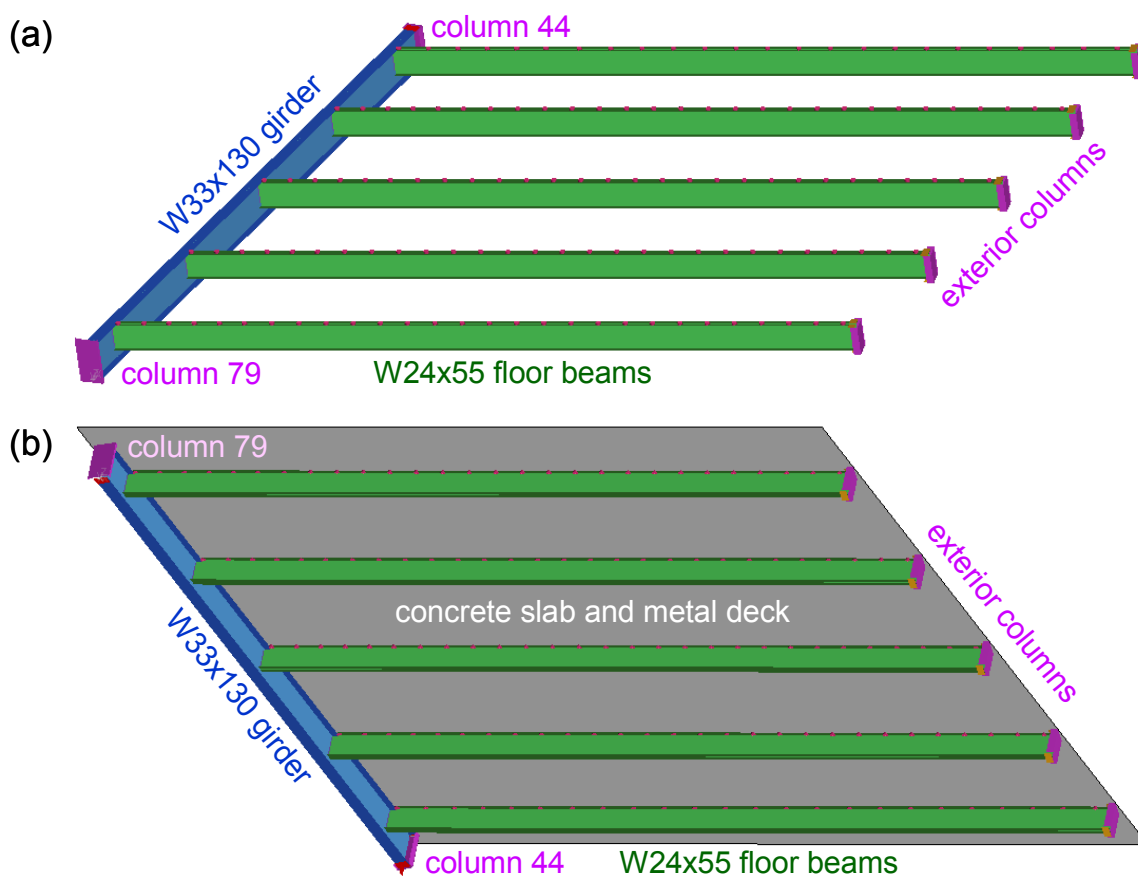
All of the framing issues noted above were found in the northeast corner of the WTC 7 (Figure 8–16). To understand whether any of these issues could have manifested in the building under fire conditions, a finite element analysis was conducted using the LS-DYNA software. The finite element model, shown in Figure 8–22, included the floor beams, girder, bolted single shear plate connections of floor beams to girder, and seat connections at both ends of the girder and at the exterior ends of the floor beams. Short sections of columns 79 and 44 and the exterior columns were modeled to provide axial restraint of the girder and beams through contact after bolt failure, as well as lateral and torsional restraint by capture of the girder and beam flanges where applicable. Figure 8–23 shows a closeup view of the connections near column 79, including the seat connection of the girder to column 79 and the single shear plate connection of a floor beam to the girder. Bolts were modeled explicitly, both in the shear connections and erection bolts in the seated connections. The metal deck and concrete slab were modeled, as were the headed shear studs on the floor beams.

The model consisted primarily of shell elements. Fully integrated shell elements were used, with five integration points through the thickness. Typical element sizes for the beams, girders, and plates were 1.8 in., while the concrete slab and metal deck was meshed more coarsely with typical element sizes of 7.5 in. A single layer of shell elements was used to represent the concrete slab and metal deck, using a

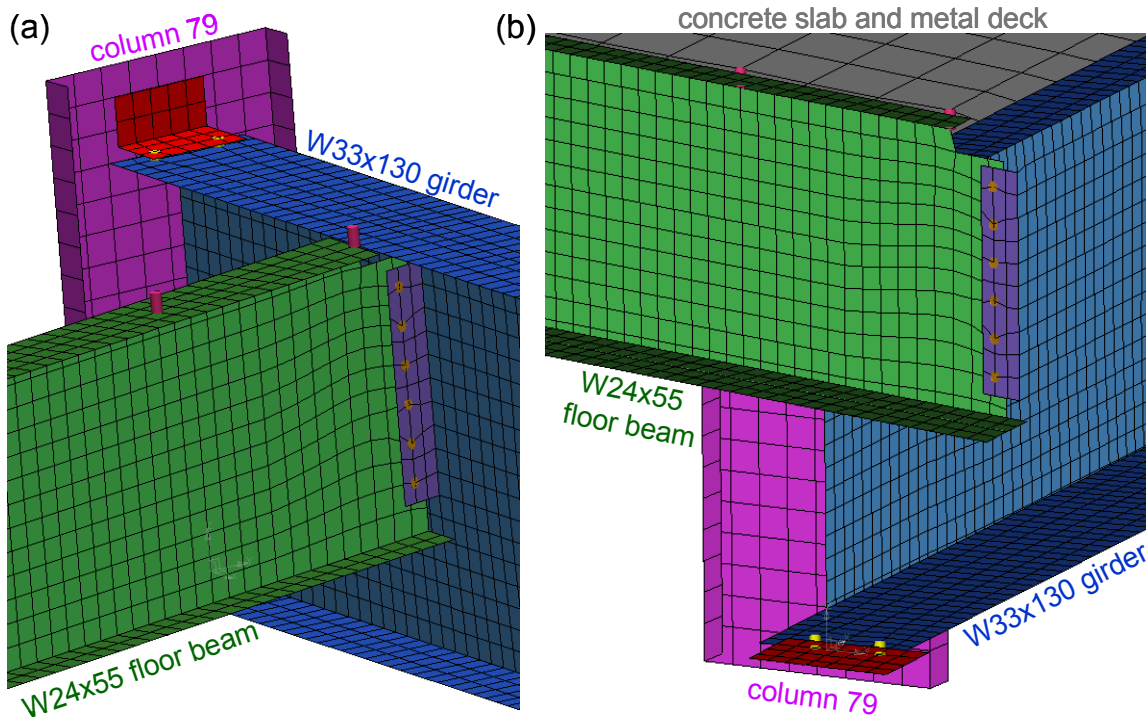
material model that allowed for different stress-strain behavior in tension and compression. The contribution of the welded wire fabric to the tensile capacity of the concrete slab was accounted for in this model. The bolts and shear studs were modeled using nonlinear discrete spring elements. Separate spring elements were used to model the shear and axial behavior of the bolts.

Vertical support for the beams and girders was provided by contact with the seats, which were explicitly modeled using shell elements. The seat at column 44 is supported from below by a vertical stiffener, which was explicitly modeled. Top plates and clip angles, where present, were also modeled, and contact with the beams and girders was defined.

For column 79, the flange on the north face and the extending portions of the side plates were modeled to allow for contact with the girder. For column 44 and the exterior columns, the column web and the flanges on the near side were modeled, and contact with the girder and the floor beams was defined. The welded edges of the seats, top plates, and clip angles were modeled as perfectly fixed. The columns were modeled as perfectly fixed along the edges of intersection between the webs and flanges and between the flange and side plates. Contact was also defined between the concrete slab and the girders to allow for transfer of the gravity loads. This contact also provided some rotational restraint for the girders and floor beams.



**Figure 8–22. Finite element model of northeast corner as viewed from the southeast**  
(a) Top view, with deck removed; (b) bottom view.



**Figure 8–23. Views from northeast showing seat connection at column 79 and bolted shear plate connection of floor beam to girder**

For the concrete slab, all translational degrees of freedom were constrained along the north and east edges, which would have been attached to the exterior girders by closely spaced shear studs. Rotations were permitted along these edges. The south edge of the concrete slab in the model was defined as the midline between two floor beams, and a symmetry boundary condition was imposed along this edge, allowing vertical displacements but no rotations about the edge axis and no north-south displacements. Similarly along the west edge, no in-plane displacements and no rotations about the edge axis were permitted. Constraining the in-plane displacements along the south and west edges accounted for the in-plane stiffness of the adjoining slab that was not included in the model. The west edge of the slab in the model was parallel to the W33x130 girder and was extended approximately 8 in. beyond the edge of the girder flange, to allow for contact between the girder and the slab to be maintained even if the girder were pushed laterally due to thermal expansion of the beams.

To avoid dynamic effects, the gravity loading was ramped up smoothly over a period of 1 s, as shown in Figure 8–24. Ramping of the temperatures for the beams and the girder then commenced at 1.1 s, as shown in Figure 8–25, leveling off at temperatures of 600 °C for the beams and 500 °C for the girder at 2.6 s. These temperature histories were prescribed uniformly for all nodes of the beams and the girder, respectively. The material model for the steel beams and girders incorporated temperature dependence in the stress-strain behavior and accounted for thermal expansion. No thermal expansion or material degradation was considered for the concrete slab.

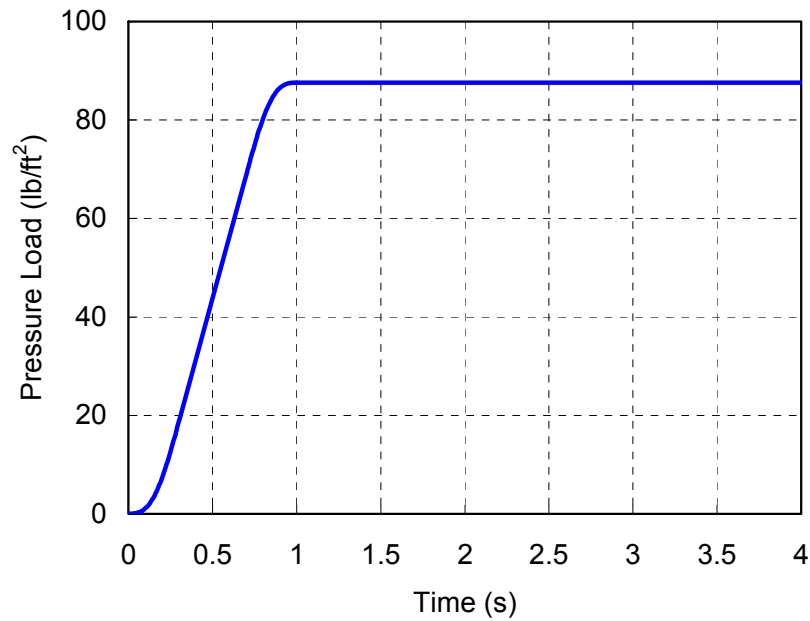


Figure 8–24. Time history of gravity loading, applied as a downward pressure on the concrete slab and metal deck.

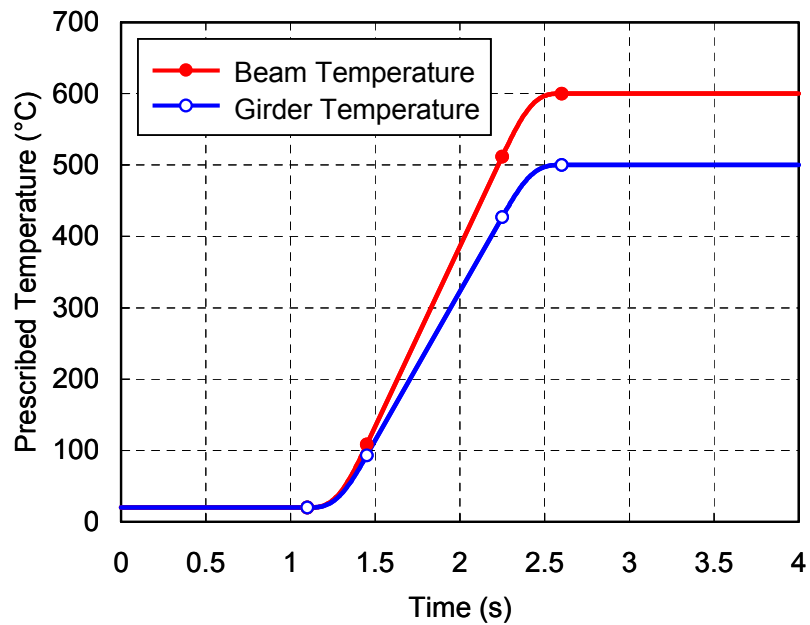


Figure 8–25. Time histories of temperatures prescribed for girders and beams.

The predicted response of the system is summarized in Table 8–2. The first failures observed were of the shear studs, which were produced by axial expansion of the floor beams, and which began to occur at fairly low beam temperature of 103 °C. Axial expansion of the girder then led to shear failure of the bolts at the connection to Column 79; and, at a girder temperature of 164 °C, all four erection bolts had failed, leaving that end of the girder essentially unrestrained against rotation. Continued axial expansion of the floor beams pushed the girder laterally at Column 79, as shown in Figure 8–26, in which failed shear studs and bolts were evident. When the beam temperatures had reached 300 °C, all but three shear studs in the model had failed due to axial expansion of the beams, leaving the top flanges of the beams essentially unrestrained laterally. Continued axial expansion of the girder caused it to bear against the face of column 79, generating large axial forces that led to failure of the bolts connecting the girder to Column 44. When the girder temperature had reached 398 °C, all four erection bolts at column 44 had failed, leaving the girder essentially unrestrained against rotation at both ends. After failure of the erection bolts in the seat at Column 44, continued axial expansion of the floor beams pushed the girder laterally, where it came to bear against the inside of the column flange. Axial compression then increased in the floor beams, and at a beam temperature of 436 °C, the northmost beam began to buckle laterally. Buckling of other floor beams followed as shown in Figure 8–27 (a), leading to collapse of the floor system, and rocking of the girder off its seat at Column 79 as shown in Figure 8–27 (b). The collapse process took time to occur in the LS-DYNA analysis, during which the temperatures had ramped up to their maximum values in the simulation.

**Table 8–2 Progression of observed failures.**

Time (s)	Temperature (°C)		Event
	Beam	Girder	
1.44	103	89	First shear stud failure
1.54	154	131	Both seat bolts of girder to column 79 had failed
1.62	194	164	Both top clip bolts of girder to column 79 had failed
1.83	300	252	All but three shear studs had failed
2.04	406	339	Both seat bolts of girder to column 44 had failed
2.10	436	364	Northmost floor beam began to buckle laterally
2.18	476	398	Both top plate bolts of girder to column 44 had failed
2.90	600	500	All floor beams began to buckle

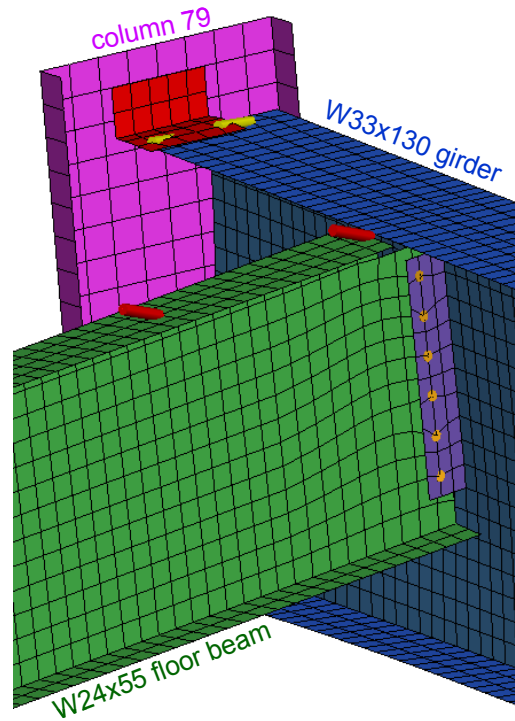


Figure 8–26. Lateral displacement of girder due to thermal expansion of floor beam.  
Note: failed bolts and shear studs

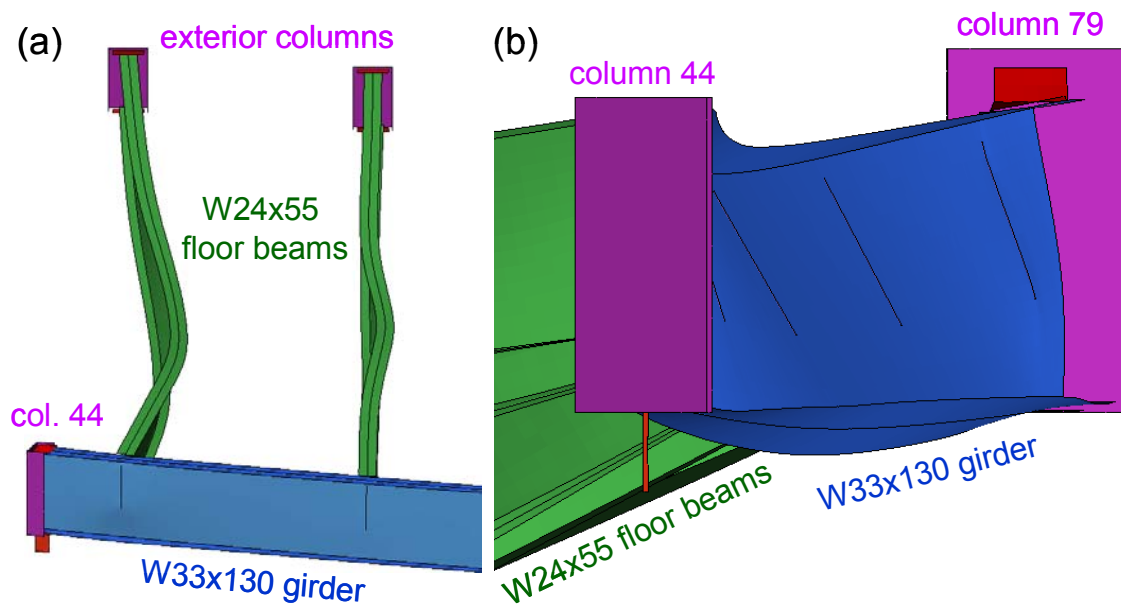


Figure 8–27. Buckled floor beams shown from above (a) and along girder (b).

## 8.9 OTHER COLLAPSE-RELATED POSSIBILITIES

### 8.9.1 Fuel Oil Fires

There were several emergency generator installations located on several different floors of WTC 7 which were supplied by either day tanks or pressurized loop fuel delivery systems. NIST investigated the possibility that rupture of one of the fuel lines might have provided a continuous supply of sufficient fuel to affect a critical column or floor system. Section 3.4.2 describes the fuel systems and their status on September 11, 2001. Section 9.2 describes a set of hypothetical, extreme diesel fuel fire scenarios and their potential consequences. Simulations showed that pool fires associated with ruptured diesel fuel lines (a) would have raised the temperatures near the generators to the point where the generators would have failed, cutting off power to the fuel pumps, (b) could not be sustained long enough or generated too little heat to raise the temperatures of the steel and concrete structure to the point of significant loss of strength or stiffness, and/or (c) would have exhausted smoke from the exhaust louvers, in conflict with the photographic evidence which showed none.

NIST also found that the day tanks on Floors 5, 7, 8, and 9 that supplied the emergency generators on those floors did not contain enough fuel to be significant contributors to the combustible load on the fire floors, and it was unlikely that the tanks could have been re-supplied because of multiple safeguards in the fuel delivery system. Further, none of the day tanks were located near the location of critical Column 79.

Thus, it was concluded that the hypothetical fuel oil fires on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, or hypothetical fires on Floors 5, 7, 8, and 9 involving day tanks, did not contribute to the collapse of WTC 7.

### 8.9.2 Hypothetical Blast Events

To determine whether explosives could have been used to cause the collapse of WTC 7, a hypothetical blast event was considered. This work is reported in detail in Appendix D, and is summarized here.

Scenarios of a hypothetical blast event that could have occurred in WTC 7 on September 11, 2001, were assessed, including blast location, size, and timing. Identification and analysis of hypothetical blast scenarios was conducted in three phases, with the results from each phase being used as input to the next phase. The three phases were:

- Phase I: Identify hypothetical blast scenarios to initiate structural collapse.
- Phase II: Assess the blast wave propagation inside the building and the corresponding response of the WTC 7 windows.
- Phase III: Assess the approximate distance from the building that the blast would have been audible in an urban setting.

In Phase I, hypothetical blast scenarios to initiate structural collapse were identified. A scenario with the minimum amount of required explosive was identified, which was appropriate for the columns selected for consideration on the east side of the building, and was used in the Phase II blast analyses. This scenario proposed a linear shaped charge blast consisting of 9 lb of RDX. The Phase II analysis centered

on Column 79, as the observations in Chapter 5 indicated that the collapse initiated at this location. The recommended column preparation for use of this shape charge required at least 30 min, plus additional time for preparations required to clear the column for cutting, such as removing walls or other coverings that might have restricted access to bare steel at a column section.

In Phase II, 2-D SHAMRC (Crepeau et al. 2001) blast propagation calculations were performed for the minimum explosive case identified in Phase I. Calculations were performed for a lesser charge size of 2 lb to evaluate threshold explosive requirements for the windows. There were four blast analyses performed in total, consisting of two different charge sizes (2 lb or 9 lb of RDX) and two floor layouts with differing partition layouts in the tenant areas. The primary conclusion from the Phase II analyses was that windows were expected to fail on the north and east faces for even the most conservative blast loading case considered (the densely-partitioned layout with a 2 lb charge). Other scenario and charge size combinations resulted in greater predicted window damage.

In Phase III, an acoustic analysis was performed to assess the distance from the building that the blast would have been audible. Adjacent buildings and their effect on the sound propagation was not considered in this analysis. Analyses were performed for both layout scenarios, using the pressure history and window failure locations from Phase II. For all four scenarios, significant audible sound was predicted from all building faces. If propagation were unobstructed (e.g., up Greenwich Street from the north face), the sound level from all building perimeter openings at 1 km would be approximately 130 to 140 dB. For comparison, sound levels generated by various sources of noise are shown in Table 8–3 (Bearden 2000).

**Table 8–3 Sound Levels Generated by Various Sources of Noise.**

Noise Source	Sound Level (dB)
Quiet library, soft whispers	30
Living room, refrigerator	40
Light traffic, normal conversation, quiet office	50
Air conditioner at 20 ft, sewing machine	60
Vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, noisy restaurant	70
Average city traffic, garbage disposals, alarm clock at 2 ft	80
Constant exposure to the following sound levels can lead to hearing loss	
Subway, motorcycle, truck traffic, lawn mower	90
Garbage truck, chain saw, pneumatic drill	100
Rock band concert in front of speakers, thunderclap	120
Gunshot blast, jet plane	140
Rocket launching pad	180

Source: Bearden (2000).

In summary, the minimum charge (lower bound) required to fail a critical column (i.e., Column 79) would have produced a pressure wave that would have broken windows on the north and east faces of the building near Column 79. The visual evidence did not show such a breakage pattern on any floor of



WTC 7 as late as about 4:00 p.m. or above the 25<sup>th</sup> floor at the time of the building collapse initiation. Views of the northeast corner at the time of the collapse were obstructed by other buildings.

Furthermore, for a shaped charge with an explosive weight equivalent to or higher than 9 lb (detonated in a single delay), the noise level at a distance of ½ mile would have been on the order of 130dB to 140 dB,<sup>3,4</sup> roughly equivalent to that of a thunderclap directly overhead or an adjacent jet engine. The sound blast in an urban setting would have propagated by being reflected and channeled down streets with minimum attenuation. The hard building exteriors would have acted as nearly perfect reflectors, with little to no absorption. The sound would have been attenuated behind buildings, but it would also generate multiple echoes. This could have extended the time period over which the sound could possibly have had an additive effect if multiple in-phase reflections met.<sup>3</sup>

People on the street would have heard 9 lb of RDX go off a mile away in air (and even further away if the wind were blowing in their direction).<sup>4</sup> There were no witness reports of such a loud noise, nor was such a noise heard on audio tracks of video tapes that recorded the WTC 7 collapse. Thus, from this study, NIST concluded that blast events could not have occurred and found no evidence of any blast events.

### 8.9.3 Fires within the Con Edison Substation

NIST considered the possibility of fire in the Con Edison Substation (Chapter 2). Eyewitness accounts and off-site monitoring of the substation operation and alarm signals provided the basis for the assessment. Details are provided in Appendix A.

Con Edison employees were present at the substation when WTC 1 was impacted by the aircraft, and additional personnel were summoned to assist in dealing with the emergency. No fire or significant physical damage was noted prior to the time the substation building was evacuated at about 10:20 a.m. NIST found no evidence that significant physical damage to the Con Edison portion of WTC 7 occurred due to the collapse of WTC 1 at 10:29 a.m.

After the building was evacuated, signals from the Con Edison substation continued to be monitored off-site throughout the day on the supervisory control and data acquisition logs. One fire detector within the Con Edison substation went into alarm mode when WTC 1 collapsed, and stayed in the alarm mode until the substation was totally isolated from incoming feeders at 4:33 p.m. However, there were no other indications (e.g., no high temperature alarms from the transformers, no visible smoke emanating from the Con Edison building) that there were significant fires within the substations during that period of time. Logical sources of the fire detector alarm were the smoke and dust dispersed in the area of the substation from the collapse of WTC 1. While several transformers uncovered during site clean-up showed clear evidence of thermal damage, from the information gathered, NIST was unable to determine whether the thermal damage to the transformers occurred due to electrical overheating, due to a fire in the Con Edison substation, or due to burning within the rubble pile subsequent to the collapse of WTC 7. Based on this evidence, NIST concluded that fire within the Con Edison substation was not a factor in the collapse of WTC 7.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication from Charles Needham and Robert MacNeill, Applied Research Associates, to NIST, 31 July 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication from Mark Loizeaux, Controlled Demolition Inc, to NIST, 5 August 2008.

## 8.10 SUMMARY

The leading hypothesis for the initiation of the collapse of WTC 7 involved:

- Initial local fire-induced floor failures initiating in the tenant floors,
- Resulting in at least one long unsupported column at the lower floors,
- Leading to buckling of a critical column (the initiating event), which supported a large-span floor bay,
- This initial local failure brought down the interior structure below the east penthouse,
- Horizontal progression of the failure across the lower floors resulted in a progressive collapse of the entire structure.

This hypothesis was supported by photographic and videographic evidence showing the collapse of the east section of the roof and the kinking of the east penthouse.

A critical look at the steel framing that supported the concrete floors in WTC 7 and, in general, the overall framing of the building, revealed several characteristics that warranted further consideration:

- Simple framing connections for girders,
- Long-span floor beams and girders,
- Asymmetric framing (one-sided lateral support to girders),
- Absence of shear studs, and
- Girder-to-column seat connections

Simple analyses revealed that, alone or in combination, these construction framing features had the potential to produce initial local fire-induced failures resulting from ordinary building contents fires on a tenant floor. The northeast corner of WTC 7 had columns that supported large floor areas and many of the construction details shown to be of importance. A finite element analysis of the northeast corner of the building, representing the framing of a lower tenant floor, verified that the following fire-induced failures were possible:

- Significant lateral deflections (movement) of the girder produced by thermal elongation of the floor beams,
- Failure of shear studs on the floor beams,
- Shear failure of the erection bolts fastening the girder to the seated connections,
- Failure of single shear plate (fin) connections attaching the floor beams to the girder, and
- Girder sliding off its seat connection.

Analysis of the northeast floor system showed that the fire-induced failure modes predicted by simple analyses were, indeed, realized for the case of uniformly increased temperatures. These results helped to guide the development of special connection elements that used a combination of break elements, rigid links, contact elements and elastic elements, that captured the salient features and failure modes of the various types of connections used in the floor system of WTC 7. These features and failure modes include individual bolt failure, weld failure, shear stud failure, contact between floor slab and girder (without shear studs), gap closing and contact, slip-off of seated connections, etc. In Chapter 11, the structural models that capture these features of the floor framing and connections, and their failure modes, are described in detail.

It was also concluded in this chapter, that neither a fuel oil fire, a hypothetical blast, nor fires in the Con Edison substation was a valid hypothesis for initiating collapse.

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