

U.S. Fire Administration/Technical Report Series

Apartment Building Fire East 50th Street New York City

USFA-TR-019/January 1988



Homeland
Security

U.S. Fire Administration Fire Investigations Program

The U.S. Fire Administration develops reports on selected major fires throughout the country. The fires usually involve multiple deaths or a large loss of property. But the primary criterion for deciding to do a report is whether it will result in significant “lessons learned.” In some cases these lessons bring to light new knowledge about fire--the effect of building construction or contents, human behavior in fire, etc. In other cases, the lessons are not new but are serious enough to highlight once again, with yet another fire tragedy report. In some cases, special reports are developed to discuss events, drills, or new technologies which are of interest to the fire service.

The reports are sent to fire magazines and are distributed at National and Regional fire meetings. The International Association of Fire Chiefs assists the USFA in disseminating the findings throughout the fire service. On a continuing basis the reports are available on request from the USFA; announcements of their availability are published widely in fire journals and newsletters.

This body of work provides detailed information on the nature of the fire problem for policymakers who must decide on allocations of resources between fire and other pressing problems, and within the fire service to improve codes and code enforcement, training, public fire education, building technology, and other related areas.

The Fire Administration, which has no regulatory authority, sends an experienced fire investigator into a community after a major incident only after having conferred with the local fire authorities to insure that the assistance and presence of the USFA would be supportive and would in no way interfere with any review of the incident they are themselves conducting. The intent is not to arrive during the event or even immediately after, but rather after the dust settles, so that a complete and objective review of all the important aspects of the incident can be made. Local authorities review the USFA’s report while it is in draft. The USFA investigator or team is available to local authorities should they wish to request technical assistance for their own investigation.

For additional copies of this report write to the U.S. Fire Administration, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727. The report is available on the Administration’s Web site at <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/>

**Apartment Building Fire
East 50th Street
New York City**

Investigated by: Randolph E. Kirby

This is Report 019 of the Major Fires Investigation Project conducted by TriData Corporation under contract EMW-86-C-2277 to the United States Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency.



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Department of Homeland Security
United States Fire Administration
National Fire Data Center

U.S. Fire Administration

Mission Statement

As an entity of the Department of Homeland Security, the mission of the USFA is to reduce life and economic losses due to fire and related emergencies, through leadership, advocacy, coordination, and support. We serve the Nation independently, in coordination with other Federal agencies, and in partnership with fire protection and emergency service communities. With a commitment to excellence, we provide public education, training, technology, and data initiatives.



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**Apartment Building Fire
East 50th Street
New York City
(January 11, 1988)**

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OVERVIEW

On January 11, 1988, at 2019, a fire in New York City was reported at 135 East 50th Street, a ten-story, 120 apartment unit building with professional offices on the first floor.

First arriving firefighting units were greeted by heavy smoke and flame coming from the lobby area. The two stairwells serving the upper floors of the building and located off the lobby area had their doors propped open and provided a path for smoke to rapidly fill the building, rendering the stairwells useless for evacuation.

Occupants were compelled to use a rear fire escape, which required some people to travel through smoke-filled corridors. Approximately 50 people were rescued by firefighters at the front of the building using ground ladders. Others remained in their apartments. Smoke spread throughout the building claimed the lives of four tenants, and injured at least two others. In addition, five firefighters were injured while fighting the fire.

The fire department utilized approximately 200 firefighters and 38 units. The fire was confined to the first floor and the situation was brought under control at 2216, approximately two hours after it started.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

| Issues | Comments |
|---------------------------|---|
| Cause | Believed accidental; started in sofa in psychologist's office on first floor of high-rise apartment building. |
| Detection/Reporting | Building visitor and employees investigated and attempted to extinguish fire before reporting it. Building occupants made aware of fire by other residents and by smoke penetrating their units. |
| Firefighting | Heavy smoke throughout building, made search and rescue difficult. Five alarms needed to provide sufficient manpower. |
| Building Structure | Sound construction coupled with quick and effective fire extinguishment prevented structural failure. Pre-finished wood paneling in office area provided tremendous fuel load for rapid fire spread. |
| Doors | Both stairway doors propped open, providing paths for heat and smoke to penetrate the building, led to fatalities. Metal apartment doors had half-inch space below them for ventilation. |
| Fire Protection Equipment | No smoke detectors in office of origin. Building lacked minimum fire protection equipment – no alarm system, no illuminated exit signs, no emergency egress lighting, no panic hardware on doors. Individual apartment units had battery-operated smoke detectors; however, majority were inoperable at time of fire. No sprinkler system. |
| Code Compliance | Building not subject to current code requirements for fire protection systems and devices as long as its use is not changed. Building previously cited for propped open fire doors. |
| Evacuation | Stairwells useless because of immediate smoke and heat penetration. Exterior fire escapes available to occupants on north side of building only. Occupants not having access to exterior fire escapes were rescued by firefighters from apartment windows on front of building. Exit doors to roof had slide bolt locks, making them difficult to unlock under dark and smoky conditions. This probably contributed to two deaths. |
| Refuge | Tenants who stayed put in their apartments behind closed doors were unharmed. |

THE STRUCTURE

The building is located in the Borough of Manhattan, with other high-rise buildings bordering three sides. The only entrance to the building is on 50th Street. It was constructed in 1922, using poured concrete floor-ceiling assembly. It is brick-faced and approximately 100 x 70 feet. (For floor plans, see Appendices C, D, and E.) The building is equipped with a service elevator and a passenger elevator. The basement contains the heating system and laundry.

There are two stairwells (A & B) located on the east and west sides. Stairwells begin at the lobby entrance and terminate at the tenth floor, with exit doors opening on the roof. Windows are provided in both stairwells from ground level to the tenth floor, with a skylight at the top of each stairwell shaft. All apartment units from the second to tenth floors are served by a 50 foot central corridor between the two stairwells. There are several apartment units on each floor whose only entrances open directly into Stairwell B. The apartment separation walls and corridor walls are constructed of solid masonry materials with painted wall surfaces.

The first floor contains several offices which had been refurbished with prefinished wood paneling over drywall and plaster walls, and suspended tile ceilings throughout the offices and corridors. The office of fire origin was used by a psychologist. One third of the apartment units are rent-controlled (meaning very low rent), and the remainder are rent stabilized (meaning a somewhat higher rent).

There are exterior fire escapes located on the north side. Only the apartment units on that side have direct access to them.

All exit and apartment doors are metal fire doors, but they had been designed with a half-inch gap at the bottom to promote air circulation.

CODES

The building was constructed under the 1920's New York Building Code and currently falls under the New York State Multiple Dwelling Law. As long as the existing use is not substantially altered, the building is considered to be in compliance and not subject to fire protection upgrading. The Fire Department of New York conducts fire safety inspections of all buildings of this type and on previous occasions cited the building owners for propping open fire doors.

The wood paneling in the doctors' offices does not meet the current code; a sprinkler system would be required in the offices to be in compliance. However, the paneling was permitted as "decoration" over the old walls under the old code. Because the renovation did not exceed 20 percent of the cost of the building, the new code did not apply.

FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS

The building is equipped with a single 4-inch standpipe located in Stairwell A with a 2-1/2-inch hose valve located at each floor level. The building does not contain a sprinkler system, fire alarm system, emergency lighting, or illuminated exit signs.

Most, if not all, of the living units had a battery operated smoke detector. However, fire department personnel found that the majority of the detectors they were able to check after the fire either had dead batteries or were without batteries.

THE FIRE

The fire was discovered by a visitor, Katryna O'Neill. As she entered the apartment building at about 2015 she smelled a faint odor of smoke. She proceeded to the waiting room of the psychologist's office on the first floor where there was an even stronger odor of smoke, and called out to see if anyone was there. Receiving no answer, she walked down the corridor to the doctor's area. When walking past office Room 103, she felt heat on her face, coming off the door. She then noticed heavy black smoke coming from underneath it. She started back toward the waiting room door and saw

two men coming toward her – the building superintendent and the doorman. She reported the fire to them. They went directly to Room 103 and attempted to put out the fire. Mrs. O’Neill returned to the lobby and used the telephone located adjacent to Stairwell A to dial 9-1-1 to report the fire. The fire dispatcher asked her for the number she was calling from but the heavy buildup of smoke during the short time she was calling prevented her from reading the number on the phone. At this time she saw the superintendent leave the waiting room and head toward the elevator. (He later was rescued from a second floor front apartment by firefighters.)

At the same time, looking through the waiting room area in the doctor’s office, she observed the other man left in office Room 103 attempting to stamp out the fire with his feet. She then began knocking on the doors in the office complex yelling “Fire.” She went through the lobby to the outside of the building, and within seconds observed a doctor, a patient, and the doorman coming out through the front door.

The alarm was received by the fire department at 2019. First due units arrived on the scene within four minutes at 2023. When entering the lobby door, firefighters encountered heavy smoke rolling over their heads and coming from the direction of the waiting room area. A set of glass doors separating the waiting room from the lobby had completely melted.

Using a 2-1/2-inch handline, firefighters began to work their way down the corridor. A second handline was placed in operation in the lobby toward Stairwell A. (The door to Stairwell A had been left propped open, thus allowing smoke and heat to quickly fill the upper floors of the structure.)

At 2029, a second alarm was ordered. Those units would be committed to rescue. Upon arrival, they observed several tenants at the windows in the front of the building. Ground ladders were placed on the one-story foyer roof which via 50 occupants were eventually rescued. By this time, the public areas of the entire building were charged with heavy black smoke.

Firefighters beginning their search inside discovered a male victim on the landing of Stairwell B between the first and second floors. He was transported to the hospital where he later died. A second body (female) was found just inside her ninth floor apartment with the door open. It was surmised that she had attempted to leave her apartment, encountered heavy smoke, and went back inside where she was overcome. Her apartment had heavy smoke damage and was next to the stairwell. It also had a fire escape; she need not have gone into the corridor to escape.

Heavy smoke and the need for additional manpower were handicapping rescue efforts.

At 2047, a third alarm was ordered. These firefighters also were committed to the rescue operation. They attempted to use exterior fire escapes located at the rear of the building, but were hampered by occupants evacuating.

Two more bodies were found on the tenth floor landing of Stairway A at the door to the roof. Both of these people had lived off Stairway B and apparently went down the corridor and into Stairwell A looking for escape.

By this time, the fire had been extinguished, but the building was still charged with heavy smoke. A fourth alarm was ordered at 2115. Arriving units were used to augment personnel in rescue operations. Firefighters went through the building and instructed tenants to remain in their apartments, as the fire was under control and they were out of danger. At about this time the fire department communications center was receiving numerous calls from tenants reporting smoke in their apartments. They were advised the situation was under control and to remain in their apartments near windows.

Some of the tenants had stopped up their doorways with towels, rags, or whatever was handy to keep out the smoke. Most did not try to enter hallways filled with smoke. Some found only light haze in their corridor, but saw heavy smoke in the stairwell and went back to their apartments.

Apartments that did not respond to firefighters' knocks at the door had to be forcibly entered to make sure there were no casualties within. The doors to the apartment units are metal and each was equipped with various lock, which made entry laboriously difficult.

At 2142 a fifth alarm was ordered. The additional personnel were primarily used to augment the search and the general overhaul of the scene. A total of 200 firefighting personnel and 38 units participated in the incident. (See list in Appendix I.) The situation was considered under control (search operation completed) at 2216.

Origin and Spread of Fire and Smoke

The fire began in the upholstered sofa of a psychologist's office on the first floor off the waiting room area. The cause of the fire is unknown and was still under investigation when this report was written.

The wood paneling utilized throughout the office complex allowed the fire to spread quickly while generating tremendous heat and smoke. The spread of smoke was exacerbated by the open stairwell doors from the lobby area, which allowed rapid movement through the upper stories. Heat from the fire broke the glass, in the mail chute which goes from the lobby area to the tenth floor. This provided another avenue for the smoke to travel upward.

Tenants attempting to exit the building from the upper stories unknowingly aided the spread of smoke by opening doors, which created drafts. The fire department also was of the opinion that several corridor doors on the upper stairwells were propped open and contributed to the heavy smoke damage throughout the building.

Smoke penetration into individual apartments was aided by the 1/2-inch gaps at the bottom of the doors. However, all who stayed in their apartments survived.

Flame damage was confined to the first floor. This was due to the quick and effective fire attack and the sound construction of the building.

Rescue and Evacuation

Approximately 50 people were removed from apartment unit windows located on the front of the building by firefighters using ground ladders. The rest exited by the fire escapes that were only on the rear side of the buildings or stayed in their apartments.

Apartments located in the rear of the building have direct access to the fire escapes by way of windows. The windows have metal security grates which had to be unlocked and opened. They may have provided obstacles to tenants evacuating the units. They were certainly an obstacle for firefighters attempting to gain entry for search and rescue.

As noted earlier, the two stairwells each begin in the lobby and terminate on the tenth floor with entrances from the stairwells to the roof. The two doors leading to the roof were latched with slide bolts. Two tenants who attempted to escape through these doors were unable to unlatch them in the heavy smoke. Their bodies were found at the doors. Further complicating escape were inadequate lighting in the stairwells and the absence of illuminated exit lights in the halls.

Several apartment units on each floor exit directly into Stairwell B. Obviously, in this situation escape was not possible through the smoke-filled stairwell. Also, many people residing on the front of the building would have had to use stairwells and corridors to gain access to other people's apartments and the fire escapes. Because of the smoke-filled stairwells and corridors, these tenants were unable to use them.

FATALITIES

There were four fatalities, all residents of the building. The first victim (male) was found in Stairwell B on the landing between the first and second floors. He was alive when discovered by firefighters and died a few hours later at the hospital due to smoke inhalation and third degree burns. He lived in apartment 6J and apparently decided to go down his stairwell, where he was overcome.

The second victim (female) was found just inside her apartment, unit 9L. She was dead on arrival (D.O.A.) and was later determined to have died from smoke inhalation.

The third and fourth victims (one male, one female) were found on the tenth floor landing of Stairwell A at the door leading to the roof. Both victims were D.O.A. It was determined later that they had died of smoke inhalation. The male victim lived in apartment 10F; the female victim in apartment 9H. They probably left their apartments, found the stairwell full of smoke, crossed through the corridor to the other side of the building, saw smoke in the stairwell, and attempted to flee to the roof, but could not get out the door.

The location of the victims prior to the fire is not known for sure. However, the three victims found in stairwells—one downstairs and two at the roof—all had apartments that exited directly into Stairwell B. (See floor plans for exact location of the victims.)

INJURIES

Building Occupants – There were two occupants who received injuries requiring hospital treatment.

- The building superintendent, a 42-year-old male, was removed by firefighters from apartment 2E and transported to the hospital where he was treated for smoke inhalation and minor facial burns. He was kept in the hyperbaric chamber overnight and released the following day. He had gone by elevator to the basement to get a portable fire extinguisher, after having investigated the fire. Along the way he had taken in a good deal of smoke. When returning from the basement, the elevator stopped on the second floor. He staggered into the hallway, and was assisted into apartment 2E by occupants who were returning to their apartments after having tried to escape down the stairwell but finding it full of smoke. The superintendent apparently did not remember much of what happened after entering the elevator until he was outside the building.
- A second tenant, a 27-year-old male in apartment 6A, was removed by firefighters and transported to the hospital where he was treated for chest pains. He was released the following day.

An unknown number of building occupants were treated at the scene for smoke inhalation. None required hospital treatment.

Firefighters – Five fire service personnel were injured. One was admitted to the hospital for smoke inhalation and exhaustion; he was released the following day. Three required outpatient hospital treatment for smoke inhalation and/or minor burns to the ears and neck and lacerations. One off-duty lieutenant who joined the firefighting slipped in the street and fell into an open manhole, injuring a leg and an arm. An additional four firefighters who had come in contact with body fluids or who administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation were checked by medical personnel at the scene and released. (The fire department now keeps records of such contacts.)

DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Fire damage was confined to the first floor office and lobby areas. There was no damage to structural components due to the building's sound construction and effective firefighting techniques. The partition walls in the office complex that had been covered by wood paneling were severely damaged as were the dropped ceilings and door components. The pre-finished wood paneling was composed of highly combustible smoke-generating materials and contributed to the tremendous amount of heat and smoke present in the first stages of the fire.

Smoke damage was heavy throughout the entire structure, especially in public areas.

The individual apartment entrance doors, having multiple locks, were subjected to considerable damage when firefighters had to force them open for search and rescue.

Dollar loss to the structure was extensive; the actual loss figure was not available at the time of this report.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Codes for Existing Buildings** – Regardless of when they were constructed, multiple occupancy residential buildings should be subjected to current fire codes regarding minimum installation of fire protection equipment. This building's fire experience is testimony to the urgent need for such equipment. A simple set of panic hardware on the doors to the roof would probably have prevented two deaths. Smoke detectors in the doctors' offices hooked to an alarm system would have detected the fire earlier. Whether or not required by codes, building owners should have enough sense of responsibility to provide at least a modicum of protection to their buildings.
2. **Code Enforcement** – Fire department inspection programs must be ongoing, thorough, and effective. This may require increasing the authority and resources available to inspectors when repeated violations of codes are encountered. The propping open of doors to the stairways contributed to all four deaths here and had been cited in previous inspections. Penalties for propped open doors are rarely significant enough or immediate enough to have impact on building operators and owners. In some countries, the owners and operators would be subject to jail terms if negligence in allowing propped open doors was proven.
3. **Fire Safety Education** – Owners and occupants of residential buildings must be made aware of the need not to circumvent the building's fire defenses, such as by opening doors at the bottom of stairwells and opening doors from corridors into the stairwells. Information must be provided and posted in appropriate areas within such buildings explaining steps to take in case of fire or other emergencies. City-wide public education of apartment residents explaining what to do in the event of a fire would help, too. In New York City, WCBS-TV has run excellent programs showing what to do in a fire. All four fatalities might have been prevented if the victims had seen and heeded the message to quickly close your door if you find smoke in the corridor.

4. **Building Operator Training** – Building personnel made several basic mistakes that may well have contributed to the damages and could have caused their own deaths. Building operators need fire safety training to protect themselves and the people who depend on them.

In this fire, for example:

- The building personnel did not immediately report the fire.
 - They did not close the door to the office suite with the fire, thereby, letting the smoke escape.
 - The superintendent apparently did not realize he should not use an elevator in a fire or how fast a fire can grow. He went to fetch an extinguisher using the elevator and was overcome by smoke by the time he returned again on the elevator.
 - Building personnel either allowed the stairway doors to be propped open or propped them open themselves.
5. **Mail Chutes** – Many old high-rise buildings have small chutes that are one continuous channel with open slots at each floor. These can be a channel for smoke transport between floors, especially when they have glass components that can break in a fire, as happened here. They need to be removed or improved with more fire-safe components.
 6. **Fire Department Manpower and Leadership** – The Fire Department of New York demonstrated once again why adequate levels of well-trained manpower and good leadership can be so important in preventing a disaster. By getting large members of personnel to the scene quickly, the department was able to evacuate 50 people by ladder and search the building for victims while the firefighting attack stopped the spread of the fire and extinguished it. New York City has had an exceedingly good record in fighting high-rise fires.
 7. **Escape or Seek Refuge** – In this particular fire it was not clear for a long time during the incident whether people should stay in their apartments or attempt to escape via ladders and fire escapes. The fire situation and the smoke situation were both uncertain, and the smoke throughout the building appeared highly ominous. The spaces under doors meant that smoke might enter every apartment, especially if windows were open, unless the doorways were stopped up by the residents – and not all of the residents did that. The fire department made an appropriate decision to get the people out while the smoke situation was uncertain. Later, when the danger seemed less, they went through the building and told people to stay in their apartments. There also was concern about stopping “jumpers.”
 8. **Desirability of Better Smoke Information** – Most current commercial smoke and fire detection systems do not show whether apartment units (as opposed to public areas) have been infiltrated with smoke. This fire was a case where it would have been useful to have detection systems that indicated the presence of smoke within individual apartment units, to aid in decision about rescue operations.

APPENDICES

- A. New York Fire Report
- B. Statement of Katryna O'Neill (witness)
- C. Floor Plan of First Floor
- D. Floor Plan of Second through Ninth Floors
- E. Floor Plan of Tenth Floor and Roof
- F. Copy of Dwelling Law Regulating Existing Structures
- G. Medical Officer Field Record
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- I. Units Used at the Fire
- J. Fire Department Dispatch Log
- K. List of Photographs and Slides

APPENDIX A

FI-1091 (3/86) 4812 50000 10-11



**BUREAU OF FIRE INVESTIGATION
FIRE REPORT**

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Incident Number Manhattan Base | Page _____ of _____ |
| Incident Date 1/11/88 | F.E. Case No. _____ |
| Incident Boro Manhattan | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Location 135 East 50th Street, Manhattan, N.Y. | | | |
| Date Assigned 1/11/88 | Unit Reporting Manhattan Base | Borough Manhattan | F.D. Job No. 305 |
| Time Out: 2019 (1/11/88) | | Received: 2045 1/11/88 | Responded: 2045 1/11/88 |
| Crime N/A | Precinct 17th | Complaint No. N/A | |
| Weather Clear, cold (Monday) | Box 858 | C.B. No. 6 | |
| Class of Structure/Vehicle Multiple dwelling | Stories 10 | Material Brick | Families Per Floor 15 |
| Owner Sylvia Handler | Address | | Insurance Building \$ |
| Occupied By Dr. Patrica Saunders | As Business | Insurance Co. | |
| Occupation Psychologist | | | Insurance Contents \$ |
| Occupant Present? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | Reporting Officer 8th Battalion Chief Cantillo | Reason 2nd Alarm | Code |
| Previous Fires—Occupant No | Previous Fires—Building No | | |
| Cause of Fire | | | |
| UNDER INVESTIGATION | | | |
| Disposition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open <input type="checkbox"/> Closed (Reason) Pending further information. | | | |
| Date of Arrival at Premises 1/11/88 | Time 2100 hours | Origin and Extension 1st fl., rear offices, hallway, waiting room, west & east stairwell entrances | |
| Name of Fire Marshal Assigned William Gaulman | | No.—Fatalities 4 | No.—Injuries 7-13 |
| Equipment Involving Ignition | Form of Heat Ignition | Type Material Ignited | Form Material Ignited |
| Ignition Factor | Area Fire Origin | Mobile Property Type | Juvenile Involved |

ORIGIN DETAILS:

Examination showed and investigation disclosed that the fire originated on the first floor of the subject premise, in the north rear office, adjacent to the east wall in a combustible material (sofa upholstery). Fire extended vertically to the east wall and ceiling next to and directly above the point of origin, via direct flame impingement, to combustible material (wall paneling and drop ceiling). Fire extended horizontally to the floor, all four walls and ceiling throughout the entire office. Fire extended via horizontal void (open doorway) to the ceiling of the main entrance hallway and further extended horizontally to west and east corridors leading to west and east stairwells. Fire further extended horizontally west to the first floor stairwell. Fire further extended horizontally east to adjacent office and was confined thereto and extinguished.

| | |
|---|---|
| Investigator Assigned Signature <i>William Gaulman</i> | Investigator Assisting F.M. Al Moller |
| Reporting Officer's Rank—Command Fire Marshal BFI MAN | S.F.M.'s Signature |
| S.F.M.'s Name Printed Robert Morrison | C.O.'s Initials |
| Investigator Assigned William Gaulman #92 | Investigator Assisting F.M. Al Moller |
| Reporting Officer's Rank—Command Fire Marshal BFI MAN | S.F.M.'s Signature |
| S.F.M.'s Name Printed Robert Morrison | C.O.'s Initials |

DISTRIBUTION: 1—B.F.I. Records Section 2—Fire Marshal's Copy 3—A.S.F. 4—Borough A.C.T. Copy 5—B.I.C.S.

APPENDIX B

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|  | | INTERVIEW SHEET | | | | PAGE _____ OF _____ PAGES |
| COMPLAINT-FOLLOW UP INFORMATION | | Location of Fire 135 East 50 Street | | Pct 17 | Complaint No. | Date of This Report 1-12-88 |
| | | F.D. Job No. 305 | Unit Reporting BUREAU OF FIRE INVESTIGATION | Branch MAIN | C.B. No. 6 | F.D. Case No. |
| Time Recd 2019 | Hours 1311X | Date 1-11-88 | Received 2030 | Hours 1-11-88 | Date 1-11-88 | Responded 2040 |

DETAILS:

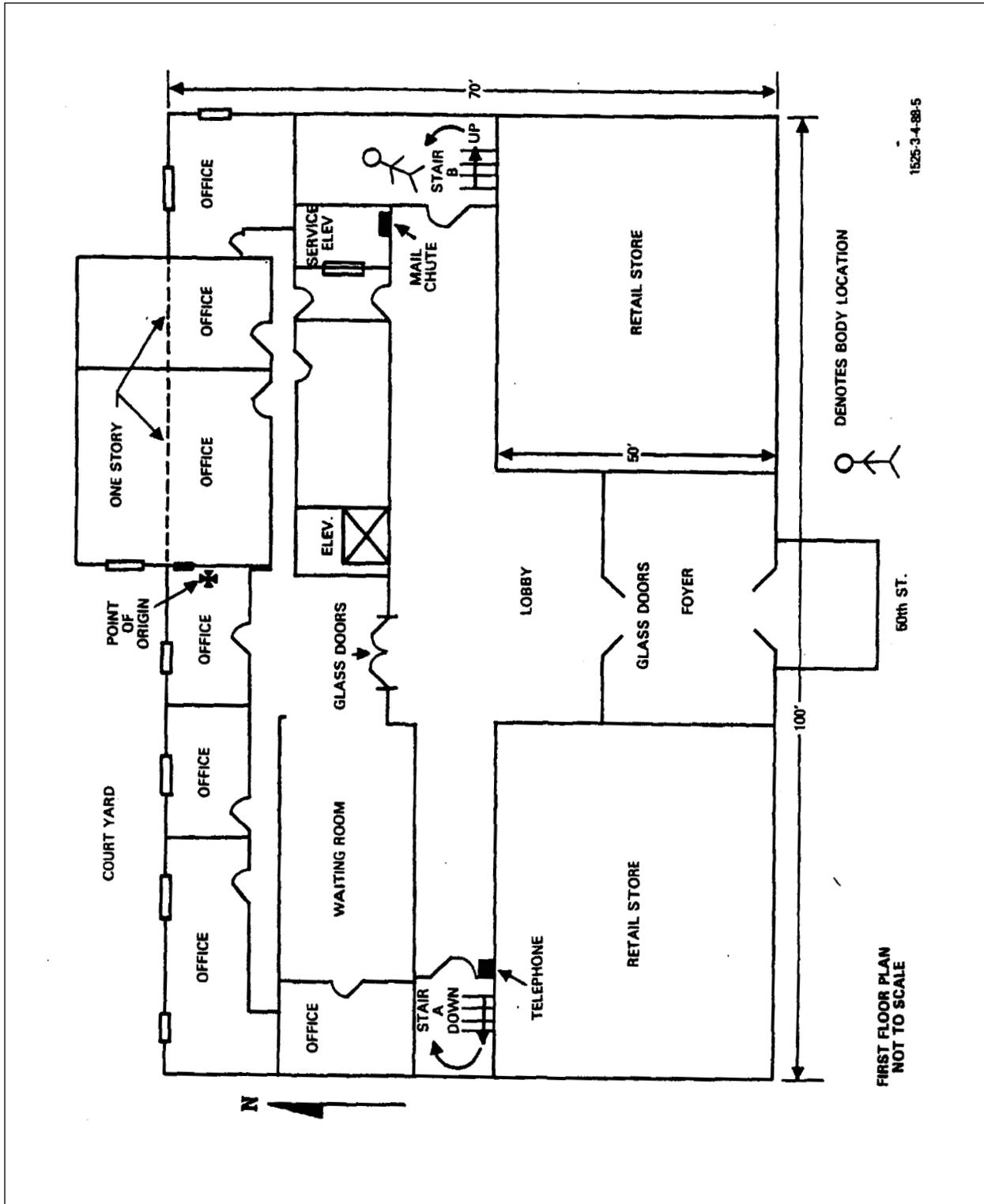
SFM Knoblich conducted the following interview via telephone at 0120 hours on 1-12-88

Katryna Oneill, F/W DOB: 10-23-62
1103 Washington Street
Hoboken, New Jersey
Phone # 201-653-4225

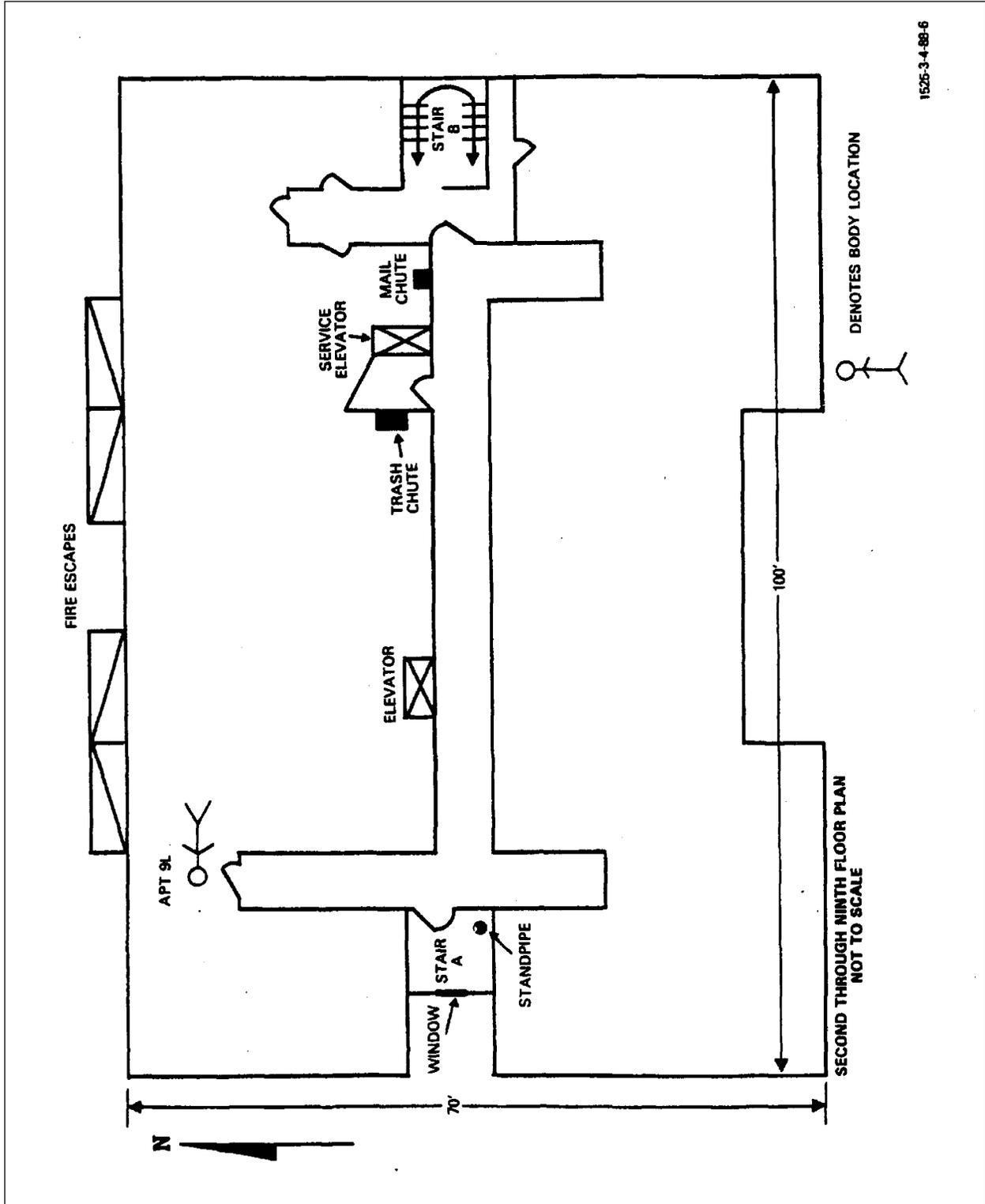
Ms. Oneill states that sometime around *:30 PM, 1-11-88 she entered the waiting area of the bldg. just inside the lobby. She smelled smoke right away, and looked around to find where it was coming from. She saw smoke coming from under the door directly in front of her, (straight back from the lobby entrance.) At this time she noticed a few people behind her, one of whom she believes to be the super. He was on the tall side, and thinnish around 30-40 years of age, with some kind of foreign accent/
She touched the door, and it felt hot. She told the super that there was a fire and that the door was hot, and that he should call the Fire Dept. he said "No, I'll care of it." She told him not to open the door because it was hot, and she went to a pay phone out side the waiting area, and dialed 911 to report the fire. The smoke was getting heavy in the bldg., because when the 911 operator asked her for the number of the phone she was calling from, she had trouble seeing the numbers on the phone.
She then returned to the waiting area, and saw that the door to the fire room was open, and someone was inside trying to stamp out the fire, in the right rear of the room as you face it. She could not tell who was in the fire room, but assumes it was the super. While she was on the phone with 911, she was out of sight of the fire room, and does not know how the door was opened, or who opened it.
She then banged on a few doors, and then left the bldg., to await the arrival of the Fire Dept. She told arriving units that a man was in the fire room when she had left the bldg.
She had no further information, and stated that she did not really know any of the people in the bldg; and had only been there a few times prior to the fire:"

MA COPY

APPENDIX C

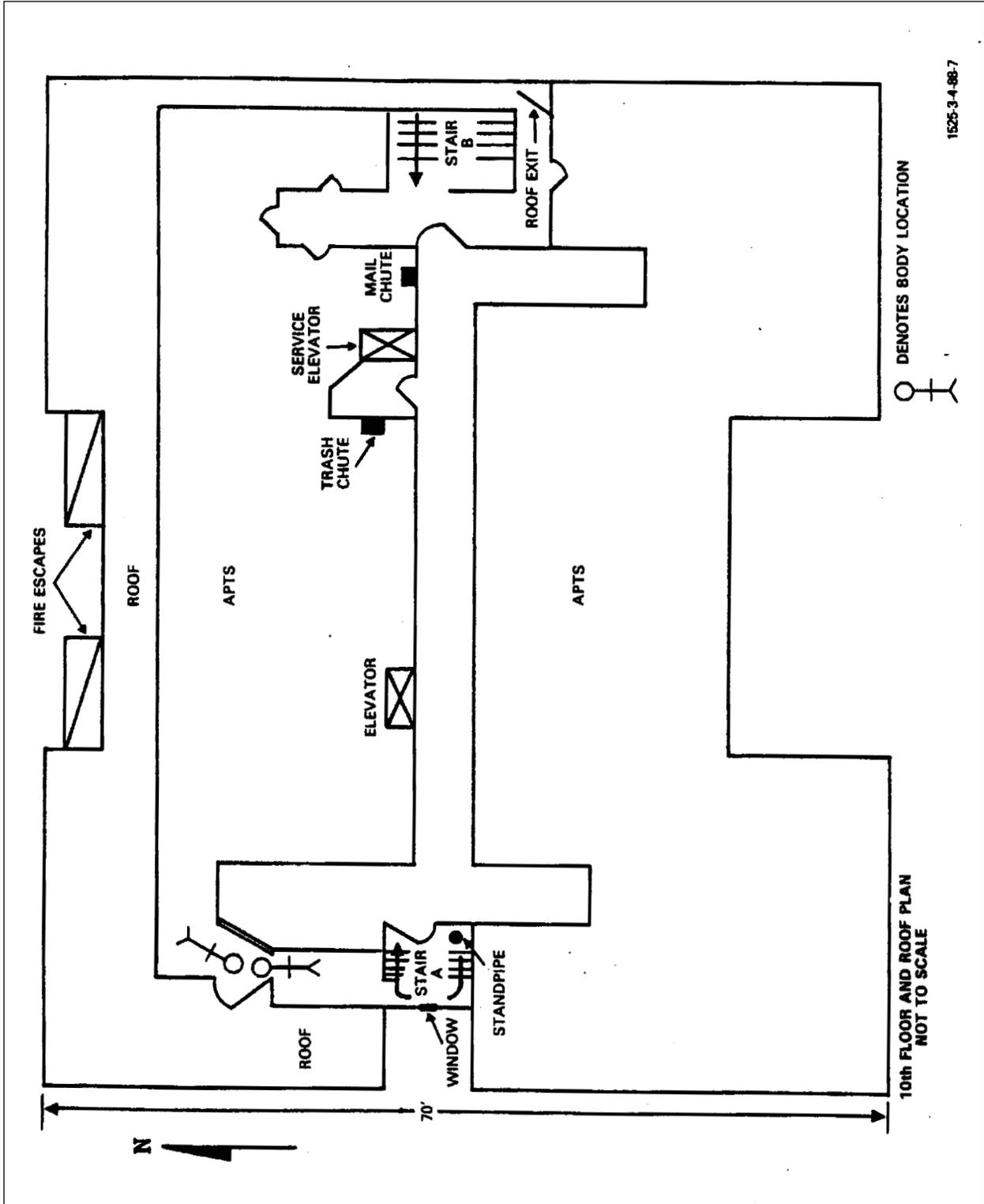


APPENDIX D



1525-3-4-88-6

APPENDIX E



APPENDIX F

Miscellaneous Application Provisions §14

2. It shall be unlawful to keep any horse, cow, calf, swine, rabbit, sheep, goat, chicken or duck, or any pigeon except Antwerp or homing pigeons. In or on any multiple dwelling or on the lot or premises thereof unless permitted by and in accordance with local law or regulation.

3. It shall be unlawful to use any multiple dwelling or any part of the lot or premises thereof for the keeping, storing or handling of any combustible article or any article dangerous or detrimental to life or health, unless a permit is obtained for such use in conformity with provisions prescribed by local law, and where such local law does not exist, in conformity with provisions prescribed by the fire department.

*(As amended L. 1969, ch. 1063, sec. 6, effective on the 30th day after May 26, 1969. L. 1969 omitted paragraphs a-c and added "any combustible article *** the fire department.")*

Sec. 13. Application of chapter to existing dwellings.

Any building erected and occupied on or before April eighteenth, nineteen hundred twenty-nine, or thereafter, as a tenement, which is not recorded as such in the department, shall be required to comply with all the provisions governing dwellings of like class or kind erected after such date. Except as otherwise expressly required in this section and in sections nine and twenty-five, subdivision six of section thirty-one, and sections thirty-three, sixty-six and sixty-seven and in articles six and seven, nothing in this chapter shall be construed to require any Change in the construction, use or occupancy of any multiple dwelling lawfully occupied as such on April eighteenth, nineteen hundred twenty-nine, under the provisions of all local laws, ordinances, rules and regulations applicable thereto on such date; but should the occupancy of any such dwelling be changed to any other kind or class after such date, such dwelling shall be required to comply with the provisions of section nine.

(As amended by L. 1960, ch. 865; approved by the Governor April 25, 1960, in effect July 1, 1960.)

See Legislative Note which appears at the end of the amendment to section 4, subd.18.)

Sec. 14. Application of chapter to uncompleted dwellings,

1. The provisions of this chapter relating to multiple dwellings erected after April eighteenth, nineteen hundred twenty-nine, shall

THE NEW YORK STATE MULTIPLE DWELLING LAW

BOOK I



1987-1988

GOULD PUBLICATIONS
199/300 STATE STREET
BINGHAMTON, N.Y. 13901-2782

APPENDIX G

MD-120 (Revised 12/24/76)

Medical Officer: Dr. MILLER

Driver/Clerk: Fr. PIETRI

MEDICAL OFFICER - PREP RECORD - CASE NO. 32
 Duty Tour: 0600 Hrs. 11/18 to 0600 Hrs. 11/21/88

(Control Boro: Manh.)
 (For DFC USE ONLY)

Page 1 of 2

| HIGH- ST ALARM | TIME OF ALARM | RESPONDING CHIEF NAME/BATT | INJURED MEMBER | | | | PRELIMINARY DIAGNOSIS | REMOVED TO: BOX OTRS. HOSP. | SICK LEAVE | | RESCUE TIME | | TIME NOTIFY | TIME ARRIVE DEPT. | BORO |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|------|------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|------|----------------|---|----------------|-------------------------|------|
| | | | LAST NAME, | FIRST INITIAL | RANK | UNIT | | | AGE | V | T | V | | | |
| 2485 | | | BESIGNANO | T. | FI | L | 28 | Pulled Crown | B HS | F/D | | | 0945 | 0910 | |
| 5-58 | 2019 | | HINE | R. | FI | L | 40 | SMOKE + EXHAUST | BELLE VUE | 1/12 | | | 2325 | 2335 | |
| | | OFF Duty | HAMILTON | B. | Lt. | E | 46 | Cont P/Amnt Aisle | u. | | | | 2305 | 2355 | |
| | | | TURBEE | M. | FI | E | 31 | EXHAUSTION | SCENE | 1/14 | | | " | " | |
| | | | COTTON | J. | FI | E | 31 | SMOKE - EXHAUST | BELLE VUE | 1/14 | | | " | " | |
| | | | WILLSON | T. | FI | E | 32 | CONT P/KNEE 20 BURN L/EAR | EDWELL BURD | 1/14 | | | 2105 | 2345 | 2355 |
| | | | BOLGONIS | E. | FI | L | 41 | LAC. L/HAND + FINGER | " | 1/14 | | | " | " | |
| | | | OPFER | E. | FI | L | 32 | Contract w/Body Fluid | SCENE | | | | " | " | |
| | | | HOPKINS | J. | FI | L | 27 | Mouth to Mouth | SCENE | | | | " | " | |
| | | | SPILLANE | J. | Lt | L | 30 | Mouth to Mouth | SCENE | | | | " | " | |
| 42 | 1715 | | GRAVES | R. | FI | L | 35 | LAC. L/Thumb | ST VINGARDS | 1/13 | | | 1835 | - | - |
| 538 | 2059 | | VOLPE | R. | FI | L | 33 | 20 BURN Neck | METRO POLITAN | 1/13 | | | 2300 | - | - |

Appendix H (Continued)

BUREAU OF FIRE INVESTIGATION
REPORT OF 10-45 - 1

LOCATION OF FIRE 135 E 50th BORO _____ CASE NO. _____
 DATE 1/11/88 DAY MON TIME 2019 SIGNAL 55-858 COMPANY DISTRICT L-2
 WHERE FIRE ORIGINATED 1st Floor Room
 CAUSE OF FIRE _____

NAME OF 10-45 Janet DGENSHIDOFF
 DATE OF BIRTH _____ AGE _____ SEX F RACE White
 ADDRESS 135 E 50th BORO Manhattan
 NATURE OF INJURIES Smoke Inhalation
 REMOVED TO HOSPITAL? NO NAME OF HOSPITAL _____
 IF 10-45-1, DATE OF DEATH 1-11-88
 CAUSE OF DEATH Smoke Inhalation DOCTOR _____
 IF 10-45-1-3, EXTENT OF INJURIES _____

FIRE MARSHAL'S SIGNATURE _____

FOR CODE 2 OR 3
 DATE _____ CONDITION _____

SIGNATURE _____

F-131 (8/84)

BUREAU OF FIRE INVESTIGATION
REPORT OF 10-45 - 1

LOCATION OF FIRE 135 E 50th BORO MAN CASE NO. _____
 DATE 1/11/88 DAY MON TIME 2019 SIGNAL 55-858 COMPANY DISTRICT L-2
 WHERE FIRE ORIGINATED 1st Floor Room
 CAUSE OF FIRE _____

NAME OF 10-45 Alice Schwartz
 DATE OF BIRTH _____ AGE _____ SEX F RACE White
 ADDRESS _____ BORO MANHATTAN
 NATURE OF INJURIES Smoke Inhalation
 REMOVED TO HOSPITAL? NO NAME OF HOSPITAL _____
 IF 10-45-1, DATE OF DEATH 1/11/88
 CAUSE OF DEATH Smoke Inhalation DOCTOR _____
 IF 10-45-2-3, EXTENT OF INJURIES _____

FIRE MARSHAL'S SIGNATURE _____

FOR CODE 2 OR 3
 DATE _____ CONDITION _____

APPENDIX I

UNITS USED AT THE FIRE

Equipment:

- 22 Engines
- 11 Ladder Trucks
- 2 Heavy Rescue Units
- 1 Satellite Unit C (High Volume Pumper)
- 1 Search Light Unit
- 1 Mask Service Unit
- 200 Personnel (approximately)

Appendix J (Continued)

| UNIT | TYPE | TIME | LOCATION | REASON | STATUS | REMARKS |
|--------|------|--------|----------|---------------|--------|---------|
| 205954 | BC12 | 205954 | 100X100 | UNIT ASSIGNED | 10 | |
| 205955 | BC12 | 205955 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFIED | 10 | |
| 205956 | BC12 | 205956 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFIED | 10 | |
| 205957 | BC12 | 205957 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFIED | 10 | |
| 205958 | BC12 | 205958 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFIED | 10 | |
| 205959 | BC12 | 205959 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFIED | 10 | |
| 205960 | BC12 | 205960 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205961 | BC12 | 205961 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFIED | 10 | |
| 205962 | BC12 | 205962 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205963 | BC12 | 205963 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205964 | BC12 | 205964 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205965 | BC12 | 205965 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205966 | BC12 | 205966 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205967 | BC12 | 205967 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205968 | BC12 | 205968 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205969 | BC12 | 205969 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205970 | BC12 | 205970 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205971 | BC12 | 205971 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205972 | BC12 | 205972 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205973 | BC12 | 205973 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205974 | BC12 | 205974 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205975 | BC12 | 205975 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205976 | BC12 | 205976 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205977 | BC12 | 205977 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205978 | BC12 | 205978 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205979 | BC12 | 205979 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205980 | BC12 | 205980 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205981 | BC12 | 205981 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205982 | BC12 | 205982 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205983 | BC12 | 205983 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205984 | BC12 | 205984 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205985 | BC12 | 205985 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205986 | BC12 | 205986 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205987 | BC12 | 205987 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205988 | BC12 | 205988 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205989 | BC12 | 205989 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205990 | BC12 | 205990 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205991 | BC12 | 205991 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205992 | BC12 | 205992 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205993 | BC12 | 205993 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205994 | BC12 | 205994 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205995 | BC12 | 205995 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205996 | BC12 | 205996 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205997 | BC12 | 205997 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205998 | BC12 | 205998 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 205999 | BC12 | 205999 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |
| 206000 | BC12 | 206000 | 100X100 | UNIT NOTIFY | 10 | |

Appendix J (Continued)

| UNIT CITY | UNIT | DISPATCH REASON | UNIT |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|------|
| 211031 B031 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211042 B001 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211127 L035 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211330 B076 | UNIT CANCELED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211338 L131 | UNIT CANCELED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211411 B032 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211412 B032 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211427 B044 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211427 B022 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211427 B005 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211427 B074 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211427 L025 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211427 SL21 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211441 B005 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211443 B043 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211444 L025 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211445 B074 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211447 E022 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211450 SL21 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211603 B018 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211614 B009 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211649 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211724 B012 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211812 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211904 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211923 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 211923 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212041 | UNIT ACKNOWLEDGE | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212103 B046 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212113 B075 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212122 F094 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212133 L042 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212216 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212216 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212216 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212339 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212339 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 212656 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 213127 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 213203 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 213951 | UNIT NOTIFIED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214012 L008 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214012 L043 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214028 L008 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214101 L043 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214216 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214226 B034 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214226 B051 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214226 F024 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214226 B005 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |
| 214239 B053 | UNIT ASSIGNED | ATU ALARM | ATP |

APPENDIX K

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND SLIDES

Photographs

1. Front of building and one story foyer.
2. Firefighters removing occupant from front of building.
3. Front of building showing windows where victims were removed by firefighters.
4. Doorway to roof on west side of building. Note slide bolt broken off (2 bodies found at base of door).
5. West corridor damage in office area.
6. Office on first floor. Note pre-finished paneling on walls and bars on windows.
7. Fire damage to rear office unit.
8. Fire damage to corridor in office area.
9. Mail chute on upper floor.
10. Fire damage to lobby area; note elevator door.
11. Entrance to floor from stairwell B; note heavy smoke damage.
12. Occupant being tended by fire service personnel.
13. Typical corridor on upper floor; note smoke damage.
14. Landing to roof exit where two bodies were found.
15. Doorway of stairwell A from lobby and telephone location.
16. Office #103, room of fire origin.
17. Point of origin in Room 103 – east wall.
18. Standpipe system and hose rack in stairwell A.
19. Typical window on rear of building; note folding security gate.
20. Security grate from typical apartment unit on rear of building.
21. Roof exit door from tenth floor. Note sliding bolt and heavy smoke damage.
22. Apartment entrance doors located off stairwell B.
23. Looking down from roof area to front of building on 50th Street.
24. Variety of locks on typical apartment door.
25. Newly installed panic hardware, after fire event.

Photographs (continued)

26. Entrance from roof onto fire escape.
27. Looking down from roof on rear of building, showing fire escape location.
28. Floor plan shown on elevator door on upper floor.
29. Waiting room doors which had melted.
30. Half-inch gap at bottom of apartment doors.

Slides (in master copy at USEA)

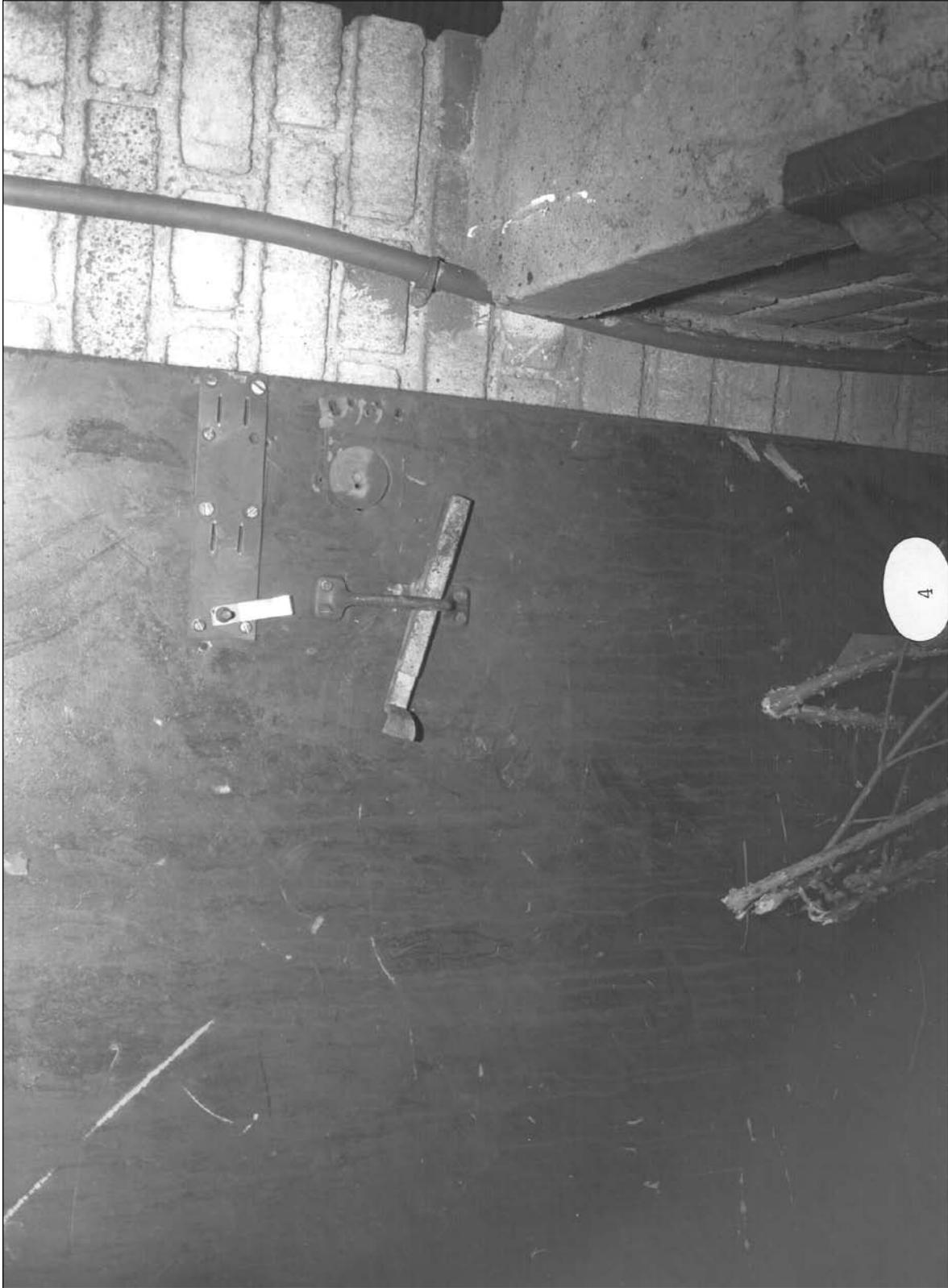
1. Windows in stairwell.
2. Parapet wall around roof area.
3. Entrance doors into lobby from 50th Street.
4. Fire damage to ceiling in lobby area. Note the relative good condition.
5. Apartment entrance doors into stairwell B.
6. Entrance door onto roof, west side of building. Two bodies found on the landing.
7. Mail chute and box in lobby area; note broken glass in chute.
8. Rooftop apartment units in rear of building showing windows.



1. Front of building and one story foyer.



2. Firefighters removing occupant from front of building.



4. Doorway to roof on west side of building. Note slide bolt broken off (2 bodies found at base of door).



5. West corridor damage in office area.



6. Office on first floor. Note pre-finished paneling on walls and bars on windows.



7. Fire damage to rear office unit.



8. Fire damage to corridor in office area.



9. Mail chute on upper floor.



10. Fire damage to lobby area; note elevator door.



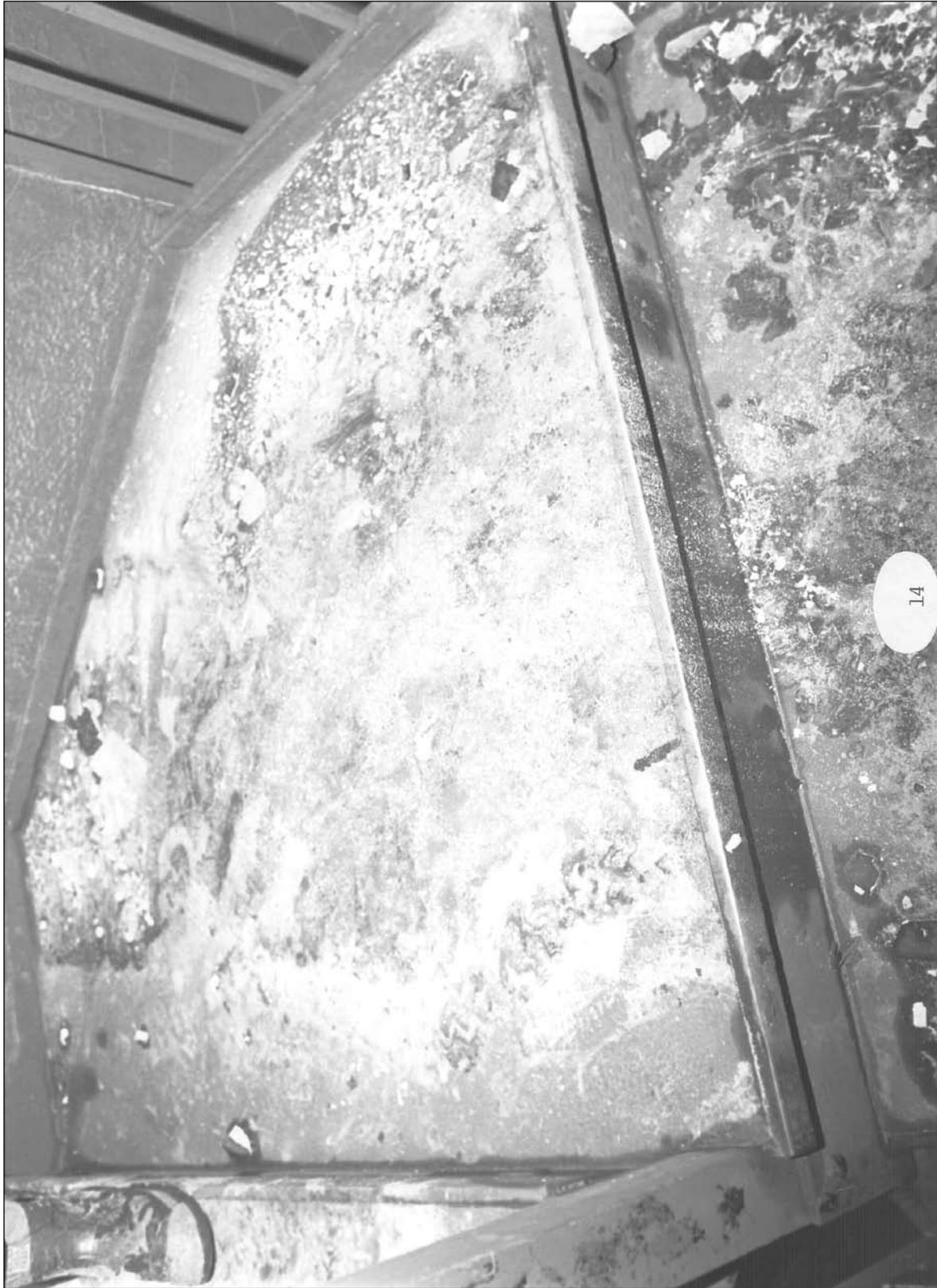
11. Entrance to floor from stairwell B; note heavy smoke damage.



12. Occupant being tended by fire service personnel.



13. Typical corridor on upper floor; note smoke damage.



14. Landing to roof exit where two bodies were found.



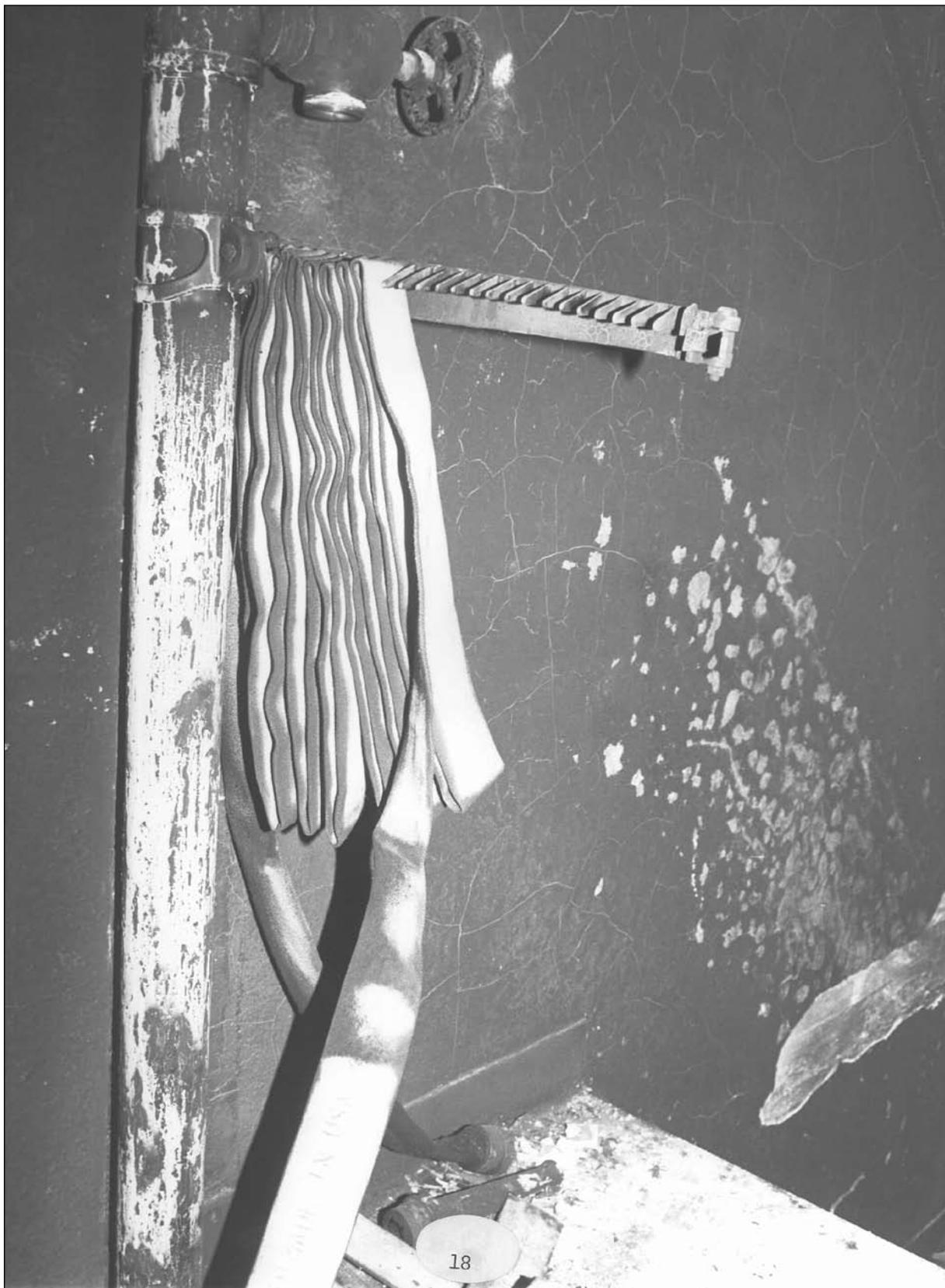
15. Doorway of stairwell A from lobby and telephone location.



16. Office #103, room of fire origin.



17. Point of origin in Room 103 – east wall.



18. Standpipe system and hose rack in stairwell A.



19. Typical window on rear of building; note folding security gate.



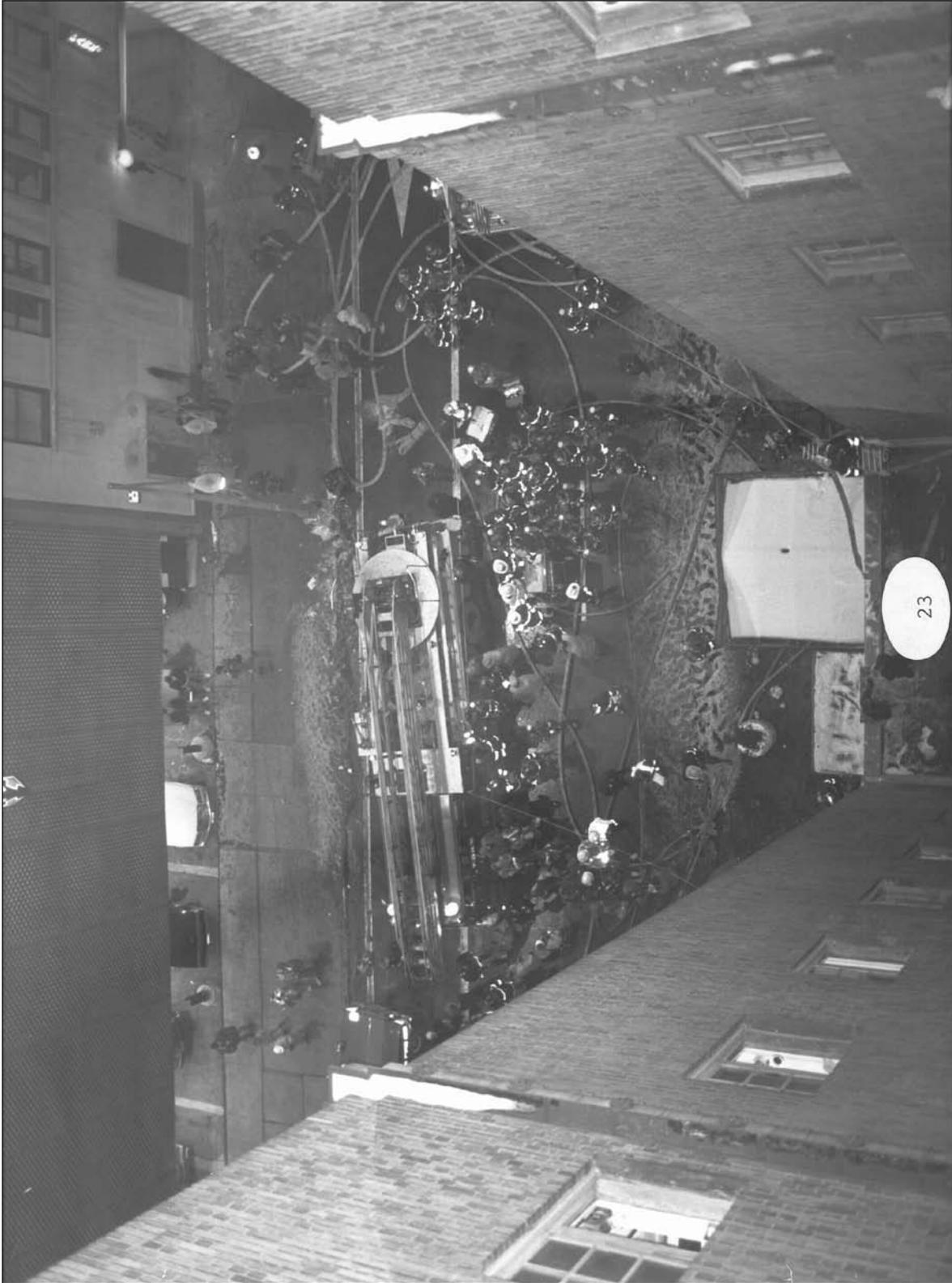
20. Security grate from typical apartment unit on rear of building.



21. Roof exit door from tenth floor. Note sliding bolt and heavy smoke damage.



22. Apartment entrance doors located off stairwell B.



23. Looking down from roof area to front of building on 50th Street.



24. Variety of locks on typical apartment door.



25. Newly installed panic hardware, after fire event.



26. Entrance from roof onto fire escape.



27. Looking down from roof on rear of building, showing fire escape location.



28. Floor plan shown on elevator door on upper floor.



29. Waiting room doors which had melted.



30. Half-inch gap at bottom of apartment doors.