

TRADE CENTER HIT BY 6-FLOOR FIRE

Blaze Starts on the 11th —16 Men Are Injured

A three-alarm fire broke out in the 11th-floor offices of the B. F. Goodrich Company in the north tower of the World Trade Center just before midnight last night, and spread through an inner-service core to the ninth and 14th floors.

"It was like fighting a blow torch," according to Capt. Harold Kull of Engine Co. 6, who said all of his men "got their necks and ears burned" trying to get into the 11th Floor hall from a stairwell. None of the firemen were seriously injured.

Mainly on One Floor

The fire appeared to be confined primarily to 11th-floor office equipment, according to Deputy Assistant Fire Chief Homer Bishop. The damage to the service core was apparently confined to electrical wiring in and near the core.

The building is not equipped with a fire sprinkler system.

A total of 24 pieces of fire-fighting apparatus and 132 firemen fought the fire. Sixteen firemen were treated at the scene for smoke inhalation.

To reach the fire, the men boarded a freight elevator to the ninth floor, attached hoses to standpipes in stairwells on the 10th floor then advance on the fire. Flames could be seen pouring out of 11th-floor windows on the east side of the building.

Fifty people, mostly maintenance men, were evacuated.

New York City's new fire code for office towers requires that floors lacking sprinkler systems be divided into units no larger than 7,500 square feet unless buildings possess special fire detection devices.

The new fire laws also requires smoke-detection systems that in the event of fire will shut down the air-conditioning system, which can spread smoke and gases through the building, and return all elevators to the lobby floor.

The elevator provision is intended to override heat-sensitive elevator call-buttons which can summon elevators to fire floors as happened in 1970 at One New York Plaza and 919 Third Avenue, where a total of five deaths in two buildings were elevator-related. It was after those fires that the new fire law was enacted.

Fire Commissioner John T. O'Hagan has stated that he considers sprinkler systems, which are activated by high temperatures, to be the most effective means of fire-fighting in high-rise buildings.

"I'd sleep a lot better at night if the World Trade Center had sprinklers," he commented recently while discussing the plausibility of skyscraper fire such as that depicted in the current film, "The Towering Inferno."

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