

Buildings may become safer

Investigators get info from Trade Center collapse

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite missteps in the inquiry in the collapse of the World Trade Center, investigators are gaining information that could lead to stricter building standards and make skyscrapers safer, officials told a congressional panel Wednesday.

Arden Bement, director of the National Institute for Science and Technology, said it was unclear what form such changes could take until more is known about why the twin towers fell. His inquiry

could take two years and cost \$40 million.

Lawmakers bemoaned the lack of clear guidance in investigating building collapses.

"There are no clear lines of authority as to who in the federal government is to conduct an investigation of a building failure," said Science Committee Chairman Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y.

"No one is in charge, no one is sure what powers the federal government can exercise, no one is sure of the scope of an investigation. That has to be fixed right away."

The team of investigators — comprised of officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, (FEMA) and the American Society of Civil Engineers — did not even get access to the site until October, a month after the attack.

They testified they never asked the city of New York not to recycle tons of steel that some experts say could hold vital clues about why the twin towers fell. And the team, which has no subpoena power, did not get access to the trade center blueprints from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey until four months after the collapse and only then after being forced to sign a form agreeing not to testify against the Port Authority.

And there was obvious confusion about who was in charge. In one testy exchange, Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y., asked the panel of witnesses who was leading the investigation and three people raised their hands.

Bement said his organization had taken control. "We're operating as if we're in charge," Bement said.

But Gene Corley, chairman of the building assessment team of FEMA and civil engineers, said he was in charge until his group's final report is issued in April.

"It does strike me that six months after the fact there shouldn't even be any doubt," said Rep. Chris Shays, R-Conn.

Robert Shea, FEMA's acting administrator of federal insurance and mitigation, testified "there are many things that in hindsight we would have done differently."

Officials told the lawmakers they need a rapid response team for building failures — modeled on the teams used by the National Transportation Safety Board in airplane crashes — with authority, subpoena power and funding.

Lawmakers pressed for more speed. "There are buildings going up right now that can use the benefit of the knowledge that is coming out," Rep. Felix Grucci, R-N.Y., said.

Under questioning from Weiner, Bement said that with the science that is available about the impact that heat and fire have on structural failure of buildings officials could have predicted about how long the trade center would have stood and possibly have prevented the loss of life.

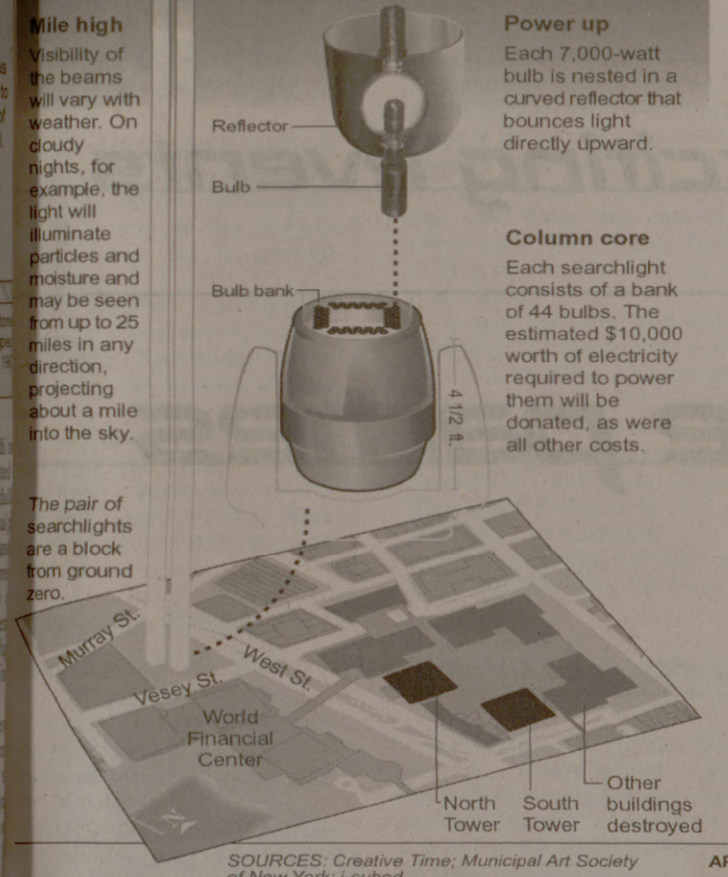
"Do you believe that if we had this information before Sept. 11 some of those people sitting behind you would not have lost loved ones?" Weiner asked referring to dozens of victims' families at the hearing.

"Perhaps, yes," Bement said.

Rep. Joseph Crowley, D-N.Y., said the recycling of trade center steel without being examined will taint the investigation.

Light and remembrance

Twin columns of light evoking the fallen towers of the World Trade Center will beam skyward at nightfall on March 11. The temporary memorial, "Tribute in Light," will be illuminated from dusk until 11 p.m. for 32 days, though it may be darkened from time to time for bird migrations or air traffic.



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Acct 230	Part 1 of 3 Tue Mar 19 7pm-9pm	Part 2 of 3 Wed Mar 20 7pm-9pm	Part 3 of 3 Thu Mar 21 7pm-9pm	
Chem 107 Mawk	Test Review Sun Mar 17 6pm-9pm			Next Week Econ 203, Mgmt 209/214,309/ 363, Phys 202
Chem 107 Mawk	Part I Mon Mar 18 6pm-9pm	Part II Tue Mar 19 6pm-9pm	Part III Wed Mar 20 6pm-9pm	
Econ 202 Allen	Part 1 of 3 Tue Mar 19 5pm-7pm	Part 2 of 3 Wed Mar 21 5pm-7pm	Part 3 of 3 Thu Mar 22 5pm-7pm	
Math 131	Part I Mon Mar 18 6pm-9pm	Part II Tue Mar 19 6pm-9pm		
Math 142	Part I Sun Mar 17 4pm-7pm	Part II Mon Mar 18 10pm-1am	Part III Tue Mar 19 10pm-1am	Old Tests Wed Mar 20 10pm-1am
Math 151	Part I Sun Mar 17 10pm-1am	Part II Mon Mar 18 8pm-10pm	Part III Tue Mar 19 8pm-10pm	Old Tests Wed Mar 20 8pm-10pm
Math 152	Part I Sun Mar 17 7pm-10pm	Part II Mon Mar 18 6pm-8pm	Part III Tue Mar 19 6pm-8pm	Old Tests Wed Mar 20 6pm-8pm
Math 251	Part I Mon Mar 18 8pm-12am	Part II Tue Mar 19 9pm-12am		

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