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Brass hit in Deutsche fire

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THE FDNY stripped a captain and a deputy chief of their commands yesterday and disciplined five others for mistakes leading to the deaths of two firefighters at the Deutsche Bank building.

Deputy Chief Richard Fuerch and Capt. Peter Bosco were permanently stripped of their commands at the lower Manhattan fire divisions that were responsible for mandatory inspections at the toxic tower, officials said.

Fuerch, Bosco and five other fire officers received a "disciplinary reprimand" — a permanent mark on their records reflecting their failures leading up to the tragic fire, officials said.

"A message had to be sent," said Fire Commissioner Nicholas

Chief & capt. lose commands; 5 reprimanded

Scoppetta yesterday. "Inspections are a crucial part of what the Fire Department does, for the safety of the public and other firefighters."

"Every one of these [disciplined] officers was in one way or another responsible for performing those inspections," Scoppetta said.

Once demolition began at the 41-story tower, which was damaged by the 9/11 terror attacks, the local firehouse was responsible for inspections every 15 days.

But several probes, including one carried out by the Manhattan district attorney's office, revealed that the mandatory inspections had not been performed, so

a 42-foot gap in the building's standpipe was never spotted.

The damaged standpipe, which prevented water from reaching firefighters on upper floors, contributed to the lethal conditions during the fire.

Firefighters Robert Beddia and Joseph Graffagnino died in the damaged building at Ground Zero in the August 2007 fire, which spawned a criminal investigation and massive reforms within the Fire Department.

Manhattan prosecutors have filed charges against several employees of private contractors working on the site. No firefighters were charged.

Fuerch, of Division 1, and

Bosco, of Engine 10, the closest firehouse to the Liberty St. high-rise, were two of the three fire officers reassigned during the FDNY's initial investigation in the days after the fire.

The third, Battalion Chief John McDonald of Battalion 1, retired last year. Sources said Bosco is also planning to retire.

The fire officers union said the trio was being scapegoated — and that the FDNY itself had long ignored inspections throughout the city.

"[The FDNY] has again distorted the truth, denigrating the reputations of seven of its finest field officers, while glossing over its own responsibility for managing the

building inspection program," said Uniformed Fire Officers Association President Jack McDonnell.

Five other officers were disciplined yesterday but not reassigned: Deputy Chiefs Paul Cresci and John Bley of Division 1, and Deputy Chiefs Roger Sakowich and Robert Norcross and Battalion Chief Ronald Schmutzler of Battalion 1.

The reprimands, which came days after a scathing Department of Investigation report, were accepted by the seven fire officers in lieu of formal charges and administrative trials. Scoppetta said he did not believe any other officers would be disciplined.

"We believe this brings to a conclusion a very unhappy chapter in the Fire Department's history," Scoppetta said.

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