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7 deadly sinners

FDNY slaps Deutsche commanders

By LEONARD GREENE

After two years, a city probe and a criminal investigation, the FDNY finally disciplined seven commanders yesterday over critical mistakes that led to the deaths of two Bravest battling a blaze at the toxic Deutsche Bank building.

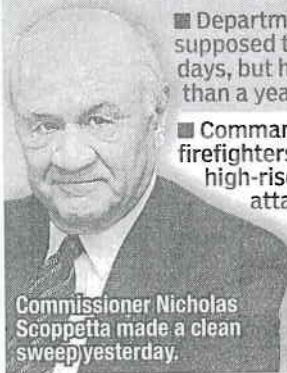
The moves cap an intense round of finger-pointing that erupted over the Aug. 18, 2007, inferno that killed firefighters Robert Beddia and Joseph Graffagnino, who ran out of air while waiting for pipes to deliver water to fight the high-rise inferno.

Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, who drew much of the heat, said supervisors failed to make sure the hulking, contaminated tower near Ground Zero was properly inspected — a crucial step that would have revealed that the basement pipe had been cut.

As wasted water splashed in the basement, the raging fire burned out of control.

Lethal blunders

Here's why heads rolled at the FDNY yesterday over the Deutsche Bank building disaster:



Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta made a clean sweep yesterday.

■ Department inspections were supposed to have been done every 15 days, but hadn't happened in more than a year.

■ Commanders sent more than 100 firefighters into the burning, toxic high-rise, despite having no plan of attack for fighting a fire in that type of building.

■ A standpipe in the basement used to deliver water from the street to each floor of the building had been cut.

It suffocated Beddia and Graffagnino, whose escape was hindered by a maze of plywood obstacles.

"Inspections are a critically important function of the department, and the failure of company officers to perform them — and the failure by supervisors to ensure they are being completed — is a serious breach of their responsibilities," Scoppetta said in a statement.

Stripped of their commands were Deputy Chief Richard Fuerch, for "failing to properly enforce inspection regulations," and Capt. Peter Bosco, for "failing to control inspections of buildings in his district," the FDNY said in a statement.

Also disciplined were Deputy Chief Paul Cresci, Deputy Chief John Bley, Deputy Chief Roger Sako-wich, Battalion Chief Ron-

ald Schmutzler and Battalion Chief Robert Norcross.

Scoppetta said the men failed to enforce inspection regulations.

The commanders were also criticized for sending more than 100 firefighters into the high-rise even though the department had no plan for fighting a fire in that kind of building.

John McDonnell, president of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, which represents commanders, could not be reached for comment.

Departmental inspections — mandated for every 15 days — hadn't happened in more than a year.

The 41-story tower is being dismantled because it was contaminated in the 9/11 attacks. Last week, three construction supervisors involved in the building's demolition were indicted on manslaughter charges.

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