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FDNY disciplines 7 in fatal '07 fire

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The Associated Press

The city's fire department disciplined seven fire commanders Wednesday over mistakes that led to a 2007 blaze that killed two firefighters at a contaminated Ground Zero skyscraper.

A deputy chief and a captain at the lower Manhattan firehouse that first responded to the fire were permanently stripped of their commands for failing to follow through on orders to make sure the former Deutsche Bank building was properly inspected, said Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scopetta. Both men are working desk jobs, he said.

He said the disciplinary actions underline the importance of fire inspections.

"I don't think there's a firefighter in the department who doesn't accept or recognize the importance of building inspections at this point," he said in a phone interview. He added, "Everyone will be held accountable for doing inspections." The city's firefighter unions did not immediately return messages left yesterday. The attorney of Capt. Peter Bosco, one of the officers who was dis-

ciplined, also did not immediately return a message.

Not a single fire inspection of the building took place as required between March 20, 2007, and the Aug. 18, 2007, fire, according to a report released last week by the city's Department of Investigation.

The two firefighters died of smoke inhalation while trying to fight the blaze, their efforts complicated by a deliberately cut standpipe that supplies water to fire hoses and a confusion of fire hazards, including deactivated sprinklers, blocked stairwells and an air pressure system that created more smoke.

Inspections would have detected the 42-foot breach in the standpipe in the tower's basement, multiple investigations found.

A costly 16-month investigation of the fire by Manhattan prosecutors forced top city officials, including the fire commissioner, to testify before a grand jury, but none were charged criminally.

Three construction officials and a subcontractor who were dismantling the toxic tower when it burned were indicted on manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide charges.

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