



Skyscraper Safety Campaign statement to the NIST Federal Advisory Committee of the National Construction Safety Team - April 29, 2003

Good Afternoon. My name is Monica Gabrielle, and I am Co-Chairperson of the **Skyscraper Safety Campaign**. Sally Regenhard, the Founder and Chairperson, unfortunately could not be here today due to conflicting organizational commitments. She sends her apologies.

The **Skyscraper Safety Campaign** was created shortly after 9/11, in memory of Christian Michael Otto Regenhard, a 28-year-old Probationary Firefighter who remains missing at the World Trade Center, along with his entire Engine Company, to this date. The organization quickly expanded to include the families of Firefighters, Emergency Workers, and civilian victims of 9/11. I lost my husband Richard, who was an employee of Aon Corp. His office was located on the 103rd floor of Tower 2. He was last seen alive, injured and waiting to be rescued, on the 78th Floor of Tower 2. He has not been recovered.

The goals of the **Skyscraper Safety Campaign** are:

- **To have a Federal, Comprehensive Investigation, with subpoena power, into the collapse of the WTC.**

We are pleased to say that this goal has been accomplished, and we urge NIST to utilize this new power whenever necessary to obtain information critical to this investigation.

- **To encourage better compliance with building and fire codes in New York City and nationwide.**
- **To educate "codes groups" to allow the Fire Service to have more input into writing Building Codes.**
- **To ensure that all future World Trade Center development by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey is characterized by quality, safety, security and New York City Building & Fire Codes compliance.**

My husband, Rich, was one of the almost 3,000 innocent souls murdered on 9/11 at the World Trade Center. He was also one of those unfortunates who was injured, but alive, waiting to be rescued, and yet was unable to get out of Tower 2 before it collapsed - enduring untold horror, pain and suffering.

Sally Regenhard's son, Christian, was a young, probationary Firefighter. He was sent in to battle a situation that ultimately took his life and the lives of 343 of his comrades. We can only guess at his last moments, and the last moments of 3,000 innocent victims.

The Skyscraper Safety Campaign represents *change*. Change to emergency evacuation procedures, change to design practices and change to our building and fire codes.

However, no discussion regarding change can be honestly undertaken without acknowledging the fact that the World Trade Center, as built by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, was a building that was totally immune from Federal, State, and New York City Building and Fire Codes, therefore rendering it "*untouchable*" by any governing agencies!

The first and most germane question must be: Why was such a building ever allowed to be constructed? And secondly, what assurances will we have that such code-immune buildings will *never* again be built in this, or any other city?

We *should not, and cannot*, ascribe the needless loss of life – the lives of 3,000 innocent persons – to the trite sound bite of “*lessons learned*”. The families of the victims deeply resent this term, which is often used as a *replacement for accountability and responsibility* and for focusing on practices, which were *deadly mistakes* and which undeniably contributed to the massive and needless loss of life at the World Trade Center on 9/11.

The **Skyscraper Safety Campaign** is interested in the end result of this investigation – the findings. We want to be assured that these findings will be written in language that is clear, concise, and specific. We want to be assured that these findings will be formatted in such a manner that they will be usable by Agencies who have the authority to implement these findings and recommendations. Although NIST does not have regulatory authority, it does have the moral and ethical obligation to ensure that any lifesaving conclusions and applications are not stored on a dusty shelf to die a lonely death, but instead are used to preserve life for the future.

For example, the **Skyscraper Safety Campaign** hopes that such a report would include specific areas such as:

1. **A Codes Section:** with recommendations for reform
2. **A Design Practice Section:** regarding design and construction, regarding egress from buildings, stairway width and design, auditory and visual cues, and so forth.
3. **A Procedures Section:** how to effect better building evacuations in general, focusing on training, equipment, rescue procedures, and the like.

We acknowledge the outstanding individuals who have been given the honor of being selected for what will truly be considered *the most important investigation of this century!*

We also acknowledge the fact that all of you willingly volunteered for this job. We want you to know that the families of the 3,000 victims are thanking you, and are counting on you with watchful anticipation, to make a real and lasting legacy for those who perished at the World Trade Center on 9/11!

We want NIST and the National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee to *clearly* understand that the *goal of implementing change should be the most important end result of this investigation.*

We need to look at the “*deadly mistakes*” of 9/11. We need to make the necessary safeguards available to prevent any other needless deaths from unsafe buildings. We must investigate evacuation issues of the World Trade Center buildings, which had three narrow staircases for a building designed to hold 25,000 people; stairway walls made of flimsy gypsum board; elevators which locked people in, and roof and stairwell doors which were locked, plus an unorthodox truss construction, which was a prescription for disaster! We need to investigate how a building whose parts should have withstood a three-hour fire rating, collapsed in *less than an hour!*

Economic loss can always be recovered. The loss of life can never be returned to us. The price we paid is much too high to not demand a return. That return *must* be the living legacy of change. When this is achieved, my husband, Sally’s son and the nearly 3,000 innocent victims of unspeakable horror will not have died in vain. To that end, we look to *you, the National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee*, to be the *conscience of this investigation*. We look to *you* to make sure that *the truth is uncovered*, and we look to *you* to be the bridge builders enabling the findings and recommendations of this investigation to be implemented in a timely manner.

This investigation must be above reproach. There can be no second-guessing in years to come. All effort must be taken to ensure that no conflicts of interest, *perceived or real*, are allowed in any aspect of this investigation, *most especially in the awarding of contracts.* *Each and every hint of impropriety must be dealt with comprehensively and solutions must be found to preserve the full integrity of this investigation.* The great writer, Virginia Wolf, once said that ... “*the dead speak to us.*” The dead are speaking to us today and it is *your* responsibility to listen to them.

Thank you...

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