



Coffee Break Training - Special Blend

Buildings with Cellars and Basements

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HONORING THE FALLEN



New York City
October 17, 1966

While operating at a 5-alarm cellar fire in a loft building, 12 firefighters were killed when the first floor collapsed and they all fell into the fire. It was the worst disaster in FDNY history until the World Trade Center (WTC) collapse.

Do you have commercial buildings with basements or cellars in your jurisdiction? Honor the fallen by taking some time to inspect these dangerous conditions so we don't repeat history.

1. Identify those buildings that have cellars or basements, perform a risk assessment, and develop a preincident action plan in the event of a fire.
2. Communicate the risk assessment and action plan to all emergency response personnel. Drill with it.
3. Check fire protection systems, especially sprinkler and standpipe fire department connections, for operational status. If they are not operational, have them repaired or at least note their status in your preincident action plan.
4. Many older cellars and basements have only one way in and out, forcing fire-fighters to attack fires through heat and smoke. Look for ventilation and emergency egress options.
5. Some basements may have abandoned or operational elevators in the sidewalk fronting the building that can provide a ventilation path.
6. Look closely for alterations or damage to the structural members that support the floor above the basement. If weak or damaged spots are identified, notify the local building department and request a structural assessment.
7. Verify that all combustibles, flammables, and hazardous materials are stored in accordance with the fire codes. Class I flammable liquids may be stored in basements only if adequate fire protection systems are provided.
8. Check to ensure that aisles through storage or regularly occupied areas are clearly marked and maintained.
9. Some older factories and mercantile buildings may have openings in the first floor for special cellar nozzles. Check the operational condition of these access points and confirm they are not covered by stock, carpet, floor coverings, or other obstructions.



The accumulation of combustible material in this basement adds a substantial amount of fuel load to an area with limited ventilation and fire attack options.

Don't let these hazards kill or injure firefighters.



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