Faulty Water Pipes Eyed in Two Firefighters’ Deaths



The deaths of two Manhattan firefighters are being blamed on malfunctioning water pipes at a high rise tower there in late August. Firefighters Goe Graffagnino, 33, and Robert Beddia, 54, died as a result of cardiac arrest caused by lack of oxygen.

Radio transmissions received before the men’s deaths indicated that standpipes in the Deutsche Bank skyscraper were not functioning. Also, sprinkler systems were not working because the building, heavily damaged in the 9/11 terror attacks, was in the midst of demolition.

Standpipes allow firefighters to connect their hoses directly to valves typically located in stairwells, instead of having to lug hoses up many floors. Investigators suspect that a broken valve was responsible for a lack of water on the 14th floor of the structure.

The problem meant that firefighters had to spend extra time lugging water hoses and they ran out of air. Conditions on the 14th floor were described as “maze-like” and it appears the men became disoriented and could not get out in time. They suffered severe smoke inhalation after running out of air.

It wasn’t immediately known what caused the fire, although cigarette butts were found in the building.