

Sprinklers Urged for Trade Center

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Fire Commissioner John T. O'Hagan said yesterday that he would make a vigorous effort to have a sprinkler system installed in the World Trade Center towers as a consequence of the fire that burned for three hours in one of them early yesterday morning.

The towers, each 110 stories tall and the highest structures in the city, are owned and operated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which is not subject to local safety codes.

As Commissioner O'Hagan stood in the sooty puddles of the North Tower's 11th-floor hallway, he told reporters that the fire would not have spread as far as it did if sprinklers had been installed there.

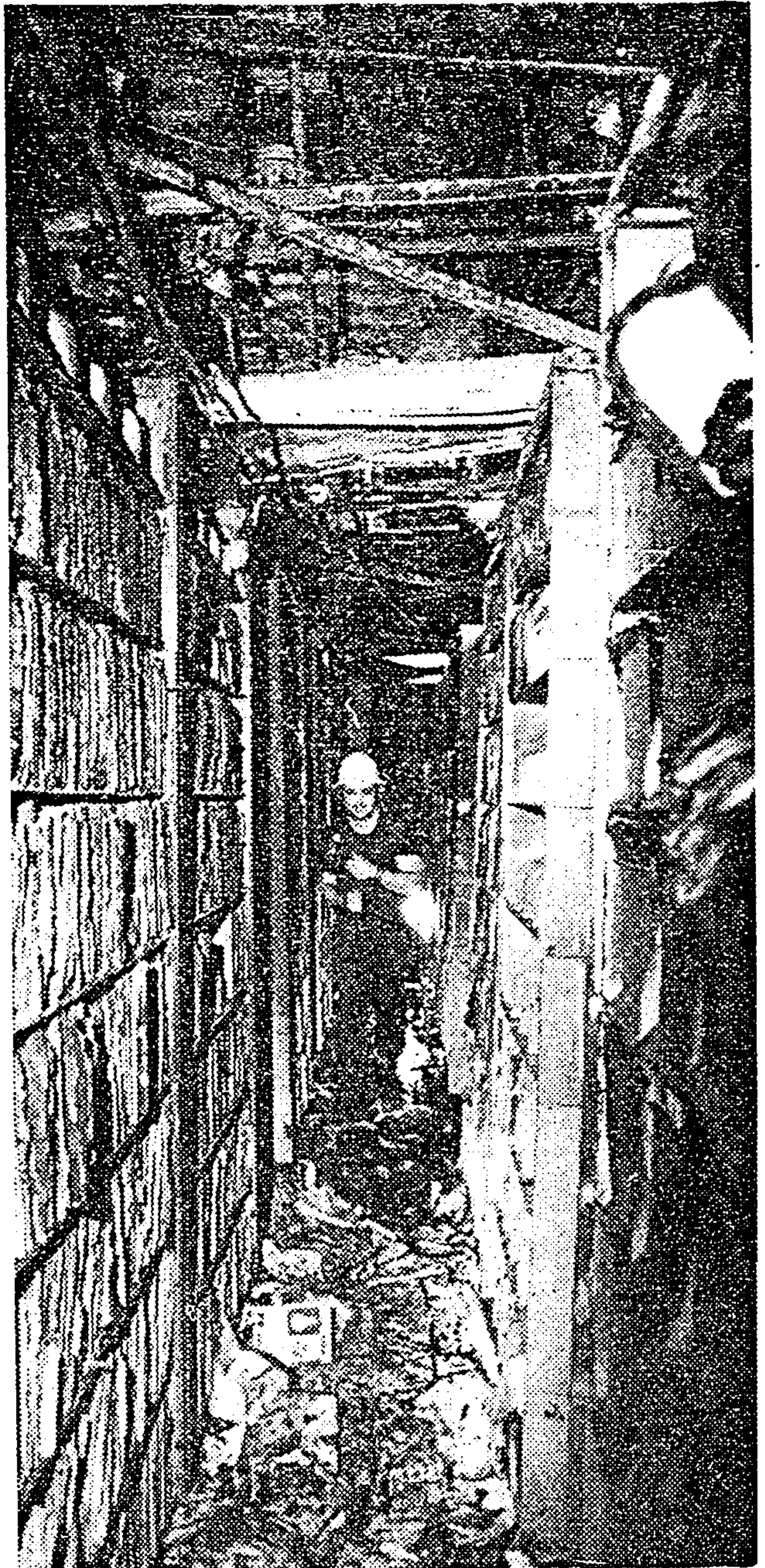
The fire spread throughout about half the offices of the floor and ignited the insulation of telephone cables in a cable shaft that runs vertically between floors. Commissioner O'Hagan said that the absence of fire-stopper material in gaps around the telephone cables had allowed the blaze to spread to other floors within the cable shaft. Inside the shaft, it spread down to the ninth floor and up to the 16th floor, but the blaze did not escape from the shaft out into rooms or hallways on the other floors.

The fire prevention and containment equipment now in the towers — comprising internal water pumps and smoke-detection systems—have long been considered inadequate by Commissioner O'Hagan. He said yesterday that he had attempted to persuade Port Authority officials that they must take additional fire-prevention measures in the towers and that about a month ago the officials promised him they would invest \$5-million in safety improvements.

A Port Authority spokesman said the installation of a sprinkler system would be extremely expensive and would inconvenience the tenants. However, on 60 floors in the South Tower, tenants working for state agencies are considering having a sprinkler system installed at their own expense.

The cause of the fire was still undetermined late yesterday, although fire marshals tentatively concluded it had started under a desk in a record storage room on the east side of the 11th floor.

A spokesman for the Port Authority said that the fire had caused about \$1-million in damages and that, as a result of it, nine concerns with offices on the 11th floor of the North Tower would be relocated within the Trade Center complex. Only the 11th-floor office area was burned, but extensive water damage occurred on the ninth and 10th floors, and smoke damage ascended as far as the 15th floor, the spokesman said.



The New York Times/Tyrone Duker

A Port Authority workman stringing temporary lighting wires inside storage and telephone switching room of R. J. Saunders, Inc., on eleventh floor of north tower of World Trade Center. Fire may have started here.

Although there were no direct of hazards they want to prevent, 28 of the 150 fire-

men called to the scene suffered minor injuries. And one man who came to work this morning only to learn that his office had been burnt out apparently had a heart attack.

The man, Albert Ullman, an export specialist with R. J. Saunders, Inc., Customs house brokers and freight forwarders, was taken to Beekman Downtown Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Two City Councilmen who have been working on a proposal for a home-rule measure that would ask the state Legislature to require the Port Authority and other state-chartered agencies to comply with local safety codes used in the north tower fire as an example

Councilmen Stephen Kaufman and Howard Golden, joint sponsors of the measure, issued a statement saying that the exemption from local safety codes of agencies like the Port Authority was "endangering the lives of tens of thousands of New Yorkers."

A spokesman for the Port Authority said that the New York Telephone Company had asked the towers maintenance men to leave certain fire-stop gaps around phone cables open to allow room for new cables in the North Tower. But a spokesman for the phone company said no such request had been made because no new cables were needed in the burned shaft.