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Criminal Investigation in Deutsche Bank Fire

By [Tom McGeeveran](#)

August 21, 2007 | 3:04 p.m.

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Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau announced today that his office has opened an investigation into the Aug. 18 fire at the Deutsche Bank building near Ground Zero "to determine whether any criminal violations occurred in connection with the fire."

There's a lot to go on.

Did a construction worker's lit cigarette spark the fire? Bloomberg reports:

The department said that Fire Marshals believe the fire started on the south side of the building's 17th floor, an area with an elevator used as an exit for workers after they had gone through a decontamination station.

"Marshals have also spoken to eyewitnesses who've stated that workers would smoke and extinguish cigarettes in this area," the fire commissioner's report said. There was also some electrical equipment at that location, including hot water heaters for the decontamination showers.

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Who was responsible to maintain the faulty water supply system that hampered efforts to extinguish the fire? A faulty standpipe meant that firefighters had to hoist rope up the building from street level with rope.

Robert Beddia, 53, of Staten Island, and Joseph Graffagnino, 33, of Brooklyn, died in the fire which also injured at least 50 people.

The city fire marshal, the Department of Buildings and several other agencies are in on the act, but Mr. Morgenthau's announcement raises the first prospect of criminal charges.

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