

Remarks by Dr. Hrach Semerjian
Acting Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology
NIST World Trade Center Investigation Report Press Briefing
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Good morning. This is an important event for all of us. Today, the National Institute of Standards and Technology—NIST—is releasing the draft summary report of our building and fire safety investigation of the September 11th World Trade Center disaster at the WTC twin towers.

We announced this investigation in August of 2002 after Congress and the President provided us with the funding necessary to do the work through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. We began planning the investigation well in advance of that.

When we began our work, we said that our investigation would be **thorough, open, independent, and result in meaningful recommendations**. We have done that to the very best of our ability, and I believe that we have succeeded. Let me elaborate, briefly.

Thorough. The collapses following the terrorist attacks and fires destroyed the structures and a host of records relating to the buildings—along with the lives of 2749 occupants and first responders. Nevertheless, NIST was able to acquire and test enough of the steel from the buildings to have confidence in our results. We were able to acquire more than 7,000 photos and 150 hours of videotape from the news media and public. We interviewed more than 1100 survivors and first responders. We were able to gain access to key information about the buildings' design and construction, and about communications by and with occupants and first responders as the disaster was unfolding. We advanced the state of the art, developing and refining complex computer models of the structures and how they would have behaved under various stresses and scenarios.

Open. We sought public comment on our plans even before we began our investigation. We held numerous briefings for the public and news media, published a host of reports updating the public on our progress and detailing our findings, and sought extensive input from our statutorily created advisory committee of outside experts. We posted information regularly on our web site, and we communicated with various public groups by establishing a special liaison with the victims' families, by speaking regularly at technical conferences, and by extensive communications with the organizations in New York City directly involved with the WTC buildings and emergency response. Today, we are opening the formal period for public comment on all of our draft reports, including recommendations. We need to hear from the public.

Independent. Independence, objectivity, and impartiality are hallmarks of all NIST work, including our building failure investigations. The conclusions of our investigation and our recommendations have been developed after extensive information gathering—but they are NIST's findings and recommendations and reflect no influence by any other organization. Bluntly, we are telling it like it was.

Meaningful recommendations. We wanted to be sure that we did not only conduct an investigation. We were charged by law with developing meaningful recommendations for improvements in the safety of buildings, their occupants, and first responders—and we have done just that. We already have begun working with the organizations that will be responsible for turning the recommendations into action, and we will hold a major conference in September to focus on what needs to be done to encourage rapid and thorough implementation.

Our job is not done. We will finalize our reports on the towers and on our recommendations after receiving public comments. We will release a report on WTC 7, another building that collapsed on September 11. We will conduct research that urgently needs to be done. We expect that the focus on

what the nation needs to do to improve safety for buildings, occupants and first responders will grow sharper as a result of the work we have done. NIST will not be satisfied until then, and until improvements are made. That is why it is so important that everyone scrutinize these recommendations, comment, and move forward thoughtfully but quickly.

Now, I would like to introduce Dr. Shyam Sunder, Deputy Director of NIST's Building and Fire Research Laboratory and Lead Investigator of our WTC investigation.