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Returning refugees say apts. robbed

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Tenants streamed back into a Battery Park City apartment complex yesterday to find blown-out windows, doors smashed open by firefighters and jewelry and other articles missing.

Police said they will investigate any reports of theft, but added that they had received only one.

The apartments most severely damaged by the collapse of the World Trade Center are in the six-building Gateway Plaza at 395 South End Ave.

About 900 tenants who call 600 Gateway home found every window in the first 25 stories on the east side blown out. Inside they found about 150 doors broken open by firefighters seeking to rouse tenants in the first hours after the explosions a block away across West St.

Tenants have been barred since the terror attack and have been allowed back in only to retrieve belongings.

Officials of the LeFrak Organization, the building's owner, insisted they kept the building secure.

'My door was wide open'

Last night a returning importer of medical imaging products said he found jewelry boxes open in his eighth-floor unit. Three watches worth \$17,000 were missing, along with several of his wife's rings and bracelets, he said.

"I'm 49 and I bought my wife some very nice stuff," said the tenant, Marcal Souto. "Anybody could have done it because my door was wide open."

Mark Frazee, a construction worker, complained that a dining room table was missing from his apartment.

"They stole my dining room table," he said, noting that an expensive TV set was untouched. "It's kind of a funny thing, but it's still a loss."

Accountant Bob Mintz said he stayed in bed during the evacuation Tuesday and saw homeless people the next day walking around with baby carriages and

items like purses and bags probably left in haste by their owners.

Bruce McDonald, another Gateway tenant, said he came back to find two cameras and two lenses missing.

The Gateway tenants' reports came the same day police said two people had been charged with theft in the shopping concourse beneath the twin towers.

A retired corrections officer and another man were arrested two days after the Sept. 11 attack for allegedly stealing \$3,700 worth of watches from a Tourneau store, police spokesman Tom Antenen said.

More buildings reopening today

In another development yesterday, Mayor Giuliani announced that eight apartment buildings in southern Battery Park City would be reopened today.

Tenants will be allowed into additional buildings next week, Giuliani said. Access, by foot only, is from Battery Place.

Buildings opening at 8 a.m. today are: Liberty Terrace at 380 Rector Place, Battery Pointe at 300 Rector Place, Liberty Court at 200 Rector Place, South Cove Plaza at 50 Battery Place, River Watch at 70 Battery Place, Liberty View at 99 Battery Place, Cove Club at 2 South End Ave. and the Regatta at 21 South End Ave.

The schedule of other openings is:

Monday — the Soundings at 280 Rector Place and Hudson View East at 250 South End Ave.; Tuesday — River Rose at 333 Rector Place.; Wednesday — Liberty House at 377 Rector Place.

The remaining buildings — Hudson Towers, Hudson View West, Parc Place and the rest of Gateway Plaza — remain closed, but the Battery Park City Authority said it is working with the Office of Emergency Management to reopen them.

The authority said tenants should contact their building management for updates. The BPCA can be reached at (646) 756-3106. Its emergency Web site is at www.bpc.mobile123.com.

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