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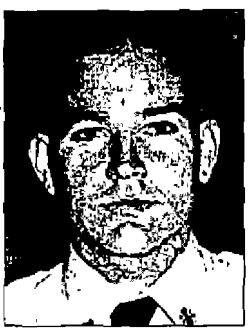
Families seek probe into why towers fell



By JOE CALDERONE
DAILY NEWS CHIEF OF INVESTIGATIONS

The families of more than 100 firefighters who perished in the World Trade Center attack are calling for an independent federal investigation into the reasons for the collapse.

The group, lead by the mother of a probationary Brooklyn firefighter who died when the towers came down, wants a blue-ribbon panel to investigate "all aspects of the causes of this event to prevent future tragedies."

Sally Regenhard, the mother of Christian Regenhard, who was killed after six weeks on the job, has gathered signatures from 160 relatives of victims endorsing a Campaign for Skyscraper Safety.

"It is imperative that an independent, federal panel be convened immediately to study the building construction, the integrity of the materials used and all the conditions that combined to cause this tragedy," Regenhard wrote in a letter to city, state and federal officials.

A leading fire safety engineer also has written to officials calling for an outside probe.

"Let's find out why the building collapsed," said Jim Quintiere, fire protection engineering professor at the University of Maryland. "You do not expect a building to collapse."

Quintiere, a national expert on fire safety, was hired by the federal government to investigate the cause of the fires that enveloped the Branch Davidian compound in 1993.

He urged a "full-scale" federal investigation to determine if fire standards for skyscrapers are adequate, if the design of the Trade Center was "inherently at fault" and if the fire insulation on steel beams was properly applied and maintained.

Quintiere joins two other fire safety experts from John Jay College of Criminal Justice's fire science department who previously called for an independent review of the fire.

DAILY NEWS EXCLUSIVE

Michael Cartier, who lost his brother in the collapse and is one of the founders of Give Your Voice, a civilian relatives' group, backs Regenhard's initiative.

"The public needs to know, certainly the families directly affected need to know, if they were improperly built. Right now, no one is trying to find out what went wrong with the towers," Cartier said.

Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen has indicated that he believes outside experts are needed to fully evaluate the fire and collapse.

"We are interested in understanding what happened here and making sure we do everything to prevent it from happening again," said Fire Department spokesman Frank Gribbon.

"This being perhaps the greatest tragedy in American history, it warrants a full and comprehensive review of what occurred, including the causes of the collapse and all related issues," he said.

"When an airplane crashes, they reassemble the entire thing in a hanger," said former Deputy Chief Vincent Dunn, who supports Regenhard's group. "With this, they are selling the steel already. I'd like to know what the engineering and architectural world thinks about what caused the collapse. I don't believe the city or state can do a proper job."



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QUESTIONS *Sally Regenhard, whose son Christian Regenhard (top) died in Trade Center attack,* **is pushing for a federal investigation into the structural reasons why the twin towers collapsed.**

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