

# OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING



## RESCUE OPERATION

Summary



PREPARED BY THE NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

# Introduction

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When a bomb exploded outside of the Murrah Building on Wednesday, April 19, 1995, a nation was shocked by the images that were being shown across the country. When the magnitude of the event was fully realized, the decision was quickly made to deploy a team of personnel from the National Fire Protection Association to document this tragic event and was enroute to Oklahoma City within hours. For the next thirteen days, a team made up of Chief Fire Investigator Ed Comeau and Fire Service Specialists Jon Jones and Stephen Foley logged over 400 staff hours observing the rescue operations, interviewing rescue workers and command officers and laying the groundwork for the development of the Oklahoma City Document Management Team.

During this period of time, the NFPA team was provided with unrestricted access to all phases of the rescue operations on a daily basis in order to record the activities of all of the rescue workers. NFPA participated in the briefings held twice a day by Rescue Command and was also briefed on a daily basis by senior command personnel. Due to NFPA's involvement in the Urban Search and Rescue program, we were able to gather a great deal of information from daily contact with the eleven US&R Task Forces that ultimately were deployed. We were provided with copies of all of the documentation generated by the Incident Support Team to assist in the recreation of this incident.

In addition to these activities, it was quickly realized that it was important to capture the memories of the incident from the first arriving responders. A team of interviewers comprised of NFPA, Oklahoma City Fire Department and National Fire Academy personnel was put together in order to meet with all of the first due crews and capture their thoughts. Twenty seven crews were interviewed, as well as 27 command officers. All of these interviews were transcribed and reviewed by the NFPA to form the basis of much of this Preliminary Report. This information is now being seen for the first time.

As a result of these documentation efforts, a Documentation Management Team was formed by Oklahoma City. Personnel from a number of departments within the city were drawn upon to form this team, whose charter was to serve as a central repository for gathering and storing information relating to the bombing. Oklahoma State University was asked to be a part of the team and quickly began to provide significant support to the operation. The NFPA was asked to serve as the principal author of the official city report. In the months since the incident, a concentrated effort has been made to capture as much information as possible, through physical documentation, pictures and interviews of the events surrounding the search and rescue operations.

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## Acknowledgements

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NFPA appreciates the assistance provided in documenting this incident, both during the seventeen days of the rescue and recovery operations and in the months afterwards by Chief Gary Marrs of the Oklahoma City Fire Department, the members of the Oklahoma City Fire Department and all of the other rescue personnel involved. We would also like to thank Deputy Chief Mark Ghilarducci of the California Office of Emergency Services and the Incident Support Team members for providing us with access to the site, records and personnel. We also appreciate the time that many members of the US&R Task Forces took to talk with us and allowing us to accompany them during the rescue operations.

The NFPA would especially like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that all members of the Oklahoma City Documentation Management Team and Oklahoma State University made towards the development of this preliminary report. Without their outstanding assistance and support, it would not have been possible.