

ers who are looking for the fire's actual location. Regardless of general appearances, they may have major structural weaknesses that have developed over the years.

**5. Pre-fire plans are essential for complex structures.**

The complex of structures involved in this fire was extremely complicated and contained several features that should have been recognized as both problems and dangers to firefighters. These factors could only have been recognized through pre-fire visits and should have been recorded in a standard pre-fire plan format to support the officer in command of a fire at this location. It is interesting to note that most of the local firefighters were somewhat familiar with the buildings but not aware of the details of construction and arrangement.

**6. Incident management procedures should be practiced and utilized at all fires.**

The direction of operations at this incident was conducted without the benefit of a standard incident management system or structure. The fire chief did not have the support of established systems to process information, analyze problems, supervise interior operations, communicate with interior crews, or support a complicated interior operation. The lack of a safety officer and the inability to communicate with interior crews were serious problems in this case.

**7. A personnel accountability system should always be used, particularly at structure fires.**

The establishment of effective accountability systems for all personnel operating at the scene of fires, particularly those working in interior operations, has become a standard safety practice. This type of system can greatly reduce the risk of overlooking personnel when a building must be evacuated. It also reduces the probability that personnel may become trapped or incapacitated and that no one would be aware that they were missing.

**Note:** The similarities of this fire should be compared with the incident in Brackenridge, Pennsylvania in 1991 and the 14th Street Collapse in New York City in 1966; two fires that had similar circumstances and lessons learned and which claimed the lives of 16 firefighters.