

# The Chrysler Building

By Deputy Chief Nicholas Corrado

The Chrysler Building rises 1,046 feet. It is 77 stories high and, because of its spire, was the first man-made structure to stand taller than 1,000 feet. It was the tallest building in the world for only 11 months, surpassed by the Empire State building in 1931. The Chrysler currently is ranked as the fifth tallest building in New York City and is located in the Turtle Bay neighborhood with an address of 405 Lexington Avenue, between 42nd and 43rd Streets.

This commercial building housed the Chrysler car corporation headquarters from its completion to the mid-1950s. Various architectural details and especially the building's gargoyles were modeled after automobile products, such as the Plymouth hood ornaments. This article describes some of the building's systems, highlights challenges during fire operations and reviews firefighting procedures in commercial high-rise buildings.

This Chrysler building has five banks of passenger elevators and a freight elevator. The freight elevator services all floors. The highest bank of passenger elevators, which services floors 57 to 72, can be accessed only by a sky lobby on the 57th floor. As mentioned in previous articles, Chiefs and Officers of first-arriving units must be aware that more staffing will be needed to properly control elevators.

The building has four stairs—A, B, C and D. Stair D services the three below-grade floors. Stair C services floors two to 23. Stair A, a fire tower, provides a standpipe and services all floors. Stair B also services all floors, but its standpipe terminates on the 48th floor. Fire located above the 48th floor requires connecting to the standpipe in stair A, the fire tower. Per FDNY tactics, fire towers are not recommended for use as fire attack stairs because they may draw the heat and smoke of the higher pressure area near the fire, toward the possible lower pressure area of the stairway. The safe tactic would be to stretch from the A to the B stair on the floor below the fire and use the B stair as the attack stair.

After determining and verifying the fire floor, the Chief Officer should be positioned at the Fire Command Station (FCS) and verify the attack and evacuation stairways, take note of access stairs in the vicinity of the fire floor and determine



At 77 stories high (1,046 feet), the Chrysler Building is the fifth tallest in New York City. The building features five banks of passenger elevators and a freight elevator. Officers must be aware that additional staffing is necessary to control the elevators.

if there is a fire tower. The Chief Officer must ensure that appropriate elevator banks are used and all cars eventually are controlled and searched. A fire safety director (FSD) must be identified and asked if any announcements have been made to occupants. A FSD must remain at the FCS to provide additional announcements as directed. An engineer, preferably the chief engineer, should be called to the FCS to verify that HVAC systems have been shut down. The Building Information Card (BIC) and Emergency Action Plan (EAP) should be made available to the Chief and referenced throughout the operation. The EAP will provide floor plans to help Chief Officers change line placement tactics if necessary. The EAP also provides a list of individuals working in the building who have limited ability to self-evacuate.

The BIC is a vital reference tool. Officers responding to commercial high-rise fires should become more accustomed to reading the BIC. A quick glance at the BIC by the first-arriving truck Officer can help in determining the safest bank of

elevators to access an upper-floor fire and identifying access stairs. A quick glance by the first-arriving engine Officer can help in identifying fire towers and stairways that provide standpipes.

A 10-76 signal requires the establishment of the Command Channel. Assignment of several Sectors should be anticipated, including the Fire, Forward Staging, Forward Triage and Search and Evacuation Sectors. The Command Channel will help the Incident Commander with communication between and among Sectors.

A leaky cable simplex UHF system was installed in the Chrysler Building to enhance Fire Department communications. The base station is located in the FSD room, adjacent to the Fire Command Station. Members should reference *Communications Manual*, chapter 13, to review the different capabilities between a leaky cable and a repeater.

## Reference

"Selecting and Operating the Correct Elevators at Fires," by then-Lieutenant Stephen Elliott, in the 3rd/2008 issue of *WNYF*. ■

## About the Author



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