

# City of New York Fire Department

October 15, 2003

Synopsis of Fire/Rescue Operations at Staten Island Ferry

Synopsis of EMS Operations at Staten Island Ferry

Five (5) pages total including this cover



# FIRE DEPARTMENT

TO: Rob Jones National Transportation Safety Board

FROM: John A. Calderone FDNY Liaison

DATE: October 22, 2003

SUBJECT: Synopsis of Fire/Rescue Operations at Staten Island Ferry 10/15/03

At 1523 hours, Wednesday, October 15, 2003, the New York City Fire Department received an alarm via telephone indicating that the ferryboat *Barberi* had struck a dock. An initial alarm assignment of three engines, two ladders, and a battalion chief were dispatched to the St. George Ferry Terminal. Prior to their arrival at the scene, a subsequent telephone call falsely reported an explosion with injuries on the *Barberi*. At that time a fireboat was dispatched. The first fire unit arrived on the scene at 1527, four minutes after the initial report. At this time, the boat was not in the terminal. Another telephone report again indicated that the boat had struck a dock. At 1532 hours, a SCUBA trained rescue company and tactical support unit were dispatched. Based on the information available to him at the time, the Incident Commander transmitted a notification signal indicating that the entire initial alarm assignment would be put to work. This notification signal resulted in the automatic dispatch of an additional engine company (that coincidentally was designated as a water rescue unit), an additional ladder company, and two additional battalion chiefs to properly implement an enlarging incident command system.

At 1536 hours, another telephone call indicated people in the water. Another fireboat, a ladder company designated as water rescue unit, a deputy chief and a marine chief were dispatched. At 1539 hours, a telephone call from an off-duty fire lieutenant who was on board the *Barberi* provided an indication of conditions on the boat. An additional rescue company, a squad company, a special operations chief, and a safety chief were dispatched.

At 1543 hours, the *Barberi* docked in the St. George Terminal. At this point, there were two battalion chiefs, four engine companies and three ladder companies ready to board the boat. The fireboat followed the *Barberi* and tied up in the adjacent slip. Firefighters entered the *Barberi* from both levels and simultaneously conducted a search for victims while performing an assessment of conditions. As the extent and severity of the incident was assessed and this information was relayed back to the incident commander, he transmitted a major emergency signal which resulted in the automatic dispatch of

additional chief officers to further expand the incident command system, and various special units including another rescue company and a collapse rescue unit equipped with a large supply of shoring material.

- Firefighters on board performed primary and secondary searches of the entire boat, located live and deceased victims, provided initial medical care and assisted in transporting victims, performed extrications of trapped victims, and conducted an extensive shoring operation to replace the destroyed columns supporting the upper decks. Operations were conducted under the incident command system, utilizing chief officers as sector or function commanders, each being assigned the number of units required to accomplish the task assigned. Operating units were rotated to avoid fatigue. No firefighters sustained injuries during this operation.

To perform these tasks in a timely manner, additional units were called to the scene either individually or by transmitting multiple alarms. (A multiple alarm is a rapid method to dispatch a pre-determined number of units to the same location.) A second alarm was transmitted at 1620 hours and a third alarm was transmitted at 1658 hours. In addition, individual units were called to the scene as needed throughout the duration of the incident.

The total fire/rescue response to this incident was two staff chiefs, three deputy chiefs, sixteen battalion chiefs, sixteen engine companies, ten ladder companies, three rescue companies, two fireboats, a squad company, a tactical support unit, a hose wagon, a fireground rehabilitation unit, a field communications unit, a technical response unit, and a collapse rescue unit, staffed by 213 personnel.



## FIRE DEPARTMENT

TO: Rob Jones National Transportation Safety Board

FROM: John A. Calderone FDNY Liaison

DATE: October 23, 2003

SUBJECT: Synopsis of EMS Operations at Staten Island Ferry 10/15/03

The New York City Fire Department is the agency responsible for pre-hospital patient care. This is accomplished utilizing a system consisting of FDNY fire suppression units trained as Certified First Responders, FDNY EMS resources that include BLS and ALS ambulances, supervisors, and special units, ambulances operated by individual hospitals or hospital systems, and ambulances operated by volunteer groups.

At 1522 hours, Wednesday, October 15, 2003, a telephone call to the 911 dispatch center indicated that a ferry had struck the slip and there possibly were injuries. Additional calls also indicated that there was a person in the water and that the boat blew up. At 1526 an ALS ambulance and a BLS ambulance were dispatched. At 1527 hours, information was received indicating that there were multiple patients needing assistance on the boat, followed a minute later by a report of one fatality on the boat. At 1530 hours another BLS ambulance and a supervisor were dispatched. The first EMS unit on scene arrived at 1529 hours, seven minutes after the initial report and three minutes after being assigned. At the time the boat docked at 1543 hours there were two BLS ambulances, one ALS ambulance, and an EMS supervisor ready to board. These personnel, assisted by fire suppression personnel, made a rapid assessment of the number of patients and number of deceased and immediately provided an estimate of twenty unstable patients and ten deceased.

EMS resources were increased to deal with the magnitude of the incident. On board the ferry, EMS personnel performed triage, classifying the victims based on the severity of their injuries. Those most serious were removed first and transported to various hospitals while other victims were stabilized on board the ferry before being transported to hospitals. The EMS actions can be summed up by stating that despite massive life-threatening injuries, all victims removed from the ferry alive are still alive as of the date of this report.

EMS operations took place as the EMS group under the incident command system established by the FDNY incident commander. In total, 52 victims were either transported to hospitals or treated and released at the scene by the EMS group. In addition, the 10 deceased were assessed in the early stages of triage. This was accomplished by 59 EMS personnel staffing 9 ALS ambulances, 15 BLS ambulances,

and 2 logistical support units (LSUs carry additional medical supplies including 20 backboards each), assisted by fire suppression personnel.

There were other injured victims who are not accounted for in the above numbers. These victims either bypassed on-scene medical treatment and made their own way to hospitals the day of the incident, or sought treatment in the ensuing days. News media reports estimate the total number of injuries at between 60 and 72, depending on the media source.