



**National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Aug. 26 - 27, 2003**  
**Statement by**  
**Monica Gabrielle, Co-Chairperson**

Good afternoon. My name is Monica Gabrielle; I am Co-Chairperson of The Skyscraper Safety Campaign, a Widow of 9/11 and your conscience.

I would like to thank everyone at NIST for the opportunity to address the Federal Advisory Committee and to offer comments, on behalf of the Skyscraper Safety Campaign, regarding the WTC Investigation.

As we rapidly reach the one-year mark of the official start of this investigation, I believe it may be an appropriate time to make sure that concerns of the families of the victims are being addressed and that this investigation is not only accomplishing its mandate, but is on target for deliverables. We look forward to receiving specific updates. I would like to once again impress upon each of you present today that this will likely be the most important investigation in which you will be involved. We, the families and the public, look to you to uncover, to the utmost best of your ability, why two 110 story towers collapsed in such a short amount of time, taking with them the innocent lives of my husband and others. We look to you to work closely with the Skyscraper Safety Campaign, its advisors and affiliates, to make sure that findings and recommendations are quickly incorporated into present codes and regulations and that obvious safety measures are immediately put into place. We look to you and your collective expertise to do all you can to ensure that no one ever again perishes in such a needless, horrible way. A huge challenge – but one I trust you are up to. This will be our shared legacy to those who perished, our children and future generations.

The Skyscraper Safety Campaign has several concerns we would very much like to put on record at this time.

An issue that has been the cause of serious unease from the beginning of this investigation is the assurance that the collection of **all** existing and necessary data and documentation involving 9/11 will be achieved. This data would, of course, include all tapes and transcripts from emergency agencies (such as the PA, FDNY, NYPD, EMS, etc.); any and all tapes and transcripts from victims' family members who may have had conversations with their loved ones; any and all data from the initial construction of the World Trade Center site through the collapse on 9/11 and would include information on any changes, upgrades, renovations or repairs to the structures by either the Port Authority or tenants. We are concerned that NIST has asked for and received **all** pertinent materials and has used "detective" methods to unearth anything presumed "lost" in the collapse of the towers. This data/document collection is critical to the investigation. NIST has repeatedly assured us that all available materials requested have either

been received or promised, with the exception of the City of New York. The SSC, in an effort to work with NIST to make sure all materials have been unearthed, has requested a list of documents and materials received to date. We were refused. Why?

Recent press articles stated that the Port Authority was in possession of 400 hours of tapes they were still transcribing. Is NIST already in physical possession of these tapes? To my delight, the Port Authority has decided not to appeal the judge's decision and will release these tapes on Thursday, at 5pm as per the original order. I personally thank Mr. Lombardi for any input he may have had with this decision. These tapes are vital as they contain radio transmissions, telephone conversations and dispatches from the Port Authority centers in Jersey City, the World Trade Center and La Guardia and Newark airports. That's a lot of information!

There are two key reasons for securing this information:

- We need to understand what transpired with regard to the emergency and rescue efforts, and
- We need to pinpoint factual information in order to develop a more comprehensive time line of critical events leading up to the collapse.

As stated by the New York Times, "... the paper ... wants to highlight the stories of unsung heroes and to examine any possible flaws in the building's design or problems with emergency response."

The evacuation component of this investigation is a huge undertaking involving in-depth interviews, data collection, analyses and eventually implementation of safety procedures from the "deadly mistakes" often referred to as "lessons learned." It is important that these interviews be done with a dual intent – getting information from the survivors about their experiences on 9/11 and attempting to extract additional worthwhile information consisting of names of those with potentially more technical information regarding either the building or emergency efforts taking place. We cannot forget the importance of speaking with any sub-contracted Port Authority employees, such as maintenance, electrical, plumbing, construction contractors, who may have been at the WTC on 9/11. This component should not be just about the evacuation. It should be an inclusive portion of the larger investigation and continue to add to already established timelines.

The Skyscraper Safety Campaign has requested that a clearly visible email program be put into place – on the website – in order to facilitate communication between the Federal Advisory Committee and victims' families, concerned citizens and those with potential technical information or advice. This would ease direct contact with the Committee members either independently or collectively as well as encourage the fully open, transparent investigation we fought so hard for. To our knowledge, this has not yet been added.

At this second meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee, I sense that an issue needs some clarification. What responsibility, if any, does the Federal Advisory Committee have to the public?

Since we are still reeling from the infamous BPAT study, which was produced behind closed doors with signed non-disclosure agreements, we are concerned that the role of this Advisory Committee may be relegated to being a spokesperson for NIST instead of adding their individual expertise to this investigation. If the Committee is to be a liaison with the public, then the current structure does not promote this. A reminder – this investigation was to be open and transparent, letting the chips fall where they may. Sadly, the Federal Advisory Committee has not been formed the way we understood it would be - including the mandatory signing of confidentiality agreements. Shockingly, the hallmark of the infamous FEMA BPAT haunts us still!

Perhaps the time has come for another round of public hearings – this time to include a hearing with interrogation, under oath, of those willfully withholding crucial information. Perhaps the time has come to stop the waiting game, become more assertive and begin using the power given to you by Congress, the power we, The Skyscraper Safety Campaign fought for. Yes, those two dreaded words – subpoena power!

We realize that there is a tremendous amount of work going on and time is not on our side. The clock is ticking – this cannot be stressed enough. In less than one year, the information needs to be collected, collated, analyzed and the results need to be ready for implementation.

Let me again remind you – the Skyscraper Safety Campaign is most serious in its goal. We will not allow any implementation or changes that need to be made for the safety of the public to be either dragged out or left to collect dust. By the time the final report is being written, we want to be moving the mountains of complacency! We anticipate that NIST will be a willing participant. We anticipate that NIST will change its mantra of not being a regulatory agency to one of being a persuasive advocate of positive change. We anticipate NIST gladly taking on the challenge to make sure that their final recommendations are realized – a major change from 1993 and the best tribute to all those lost on 9/11.

At this time, I would like to thank everyone for their presentations and I would like to thank the Committee members for their spirited, proactive participation at today's hearing. My observation of the interaction and questions raised by the Committee members and NIST is that there are some important elements of the Federal Advisory Committee's role that needs to be made clear. I would also like to suggest that all future meetings or hearings be, at the very least, audio taped in order to have an accurate record of what transpired.

Thank you.

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