

The Sit Rep

Newsletter of the NYC Office of Emergency Management

Triangle Shirtwaist: 100 Years Later

by Patricia Emrich and Justin Land



Firefighters battling the Triangle Shirtwaist factory blaze in 1911

source: Cornell University Kheel Center

At approximately 4:40 PM on March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Waist Company near Washington Square Park in Manhattan. Located in the original Asch building (now the NYU Brown Building of Science), the Triangle Waist Company occupied the eighth, ninth and 10th floors and manufactured shirtwaists – popular women’s garments at the time. The 146 workers trapped inside the building, most on the ninth floor, were either burned alive or jumped to their deaths.

After the fatal fire, which consumed the building in less than 20 minutes, blame was parceled out to various parties. The owners

of the Waist Company were blamed for subpar working conditions, such as the eight continuous tables of 240 sewing machines on the ninth floor and a locked door leading to one of only two staircases. The owners and head architect of the Asch building were held responsible for ignoring Department of Buildings (DOB) objections and corrective recommendations to the original building plans, which included an additional staircase and more substantial fire escapes. Lastly, DOB was blamed for not enforcing its recommendations and granting exemptions to its own corrective measures.

One hundred years after the fire, New York City commemorated the centennial of this seminal, albeit tragic incident. Akin to the people’s response in 1911, thousands of New Yorkers gathered at the site, including the Mayor, FDNY commissioner, and individuals from numerous government, labor, community, and academic organizations. A fire ladder was raised to the six-story height, the full extension possible in 1911, and a fire bell rang 146 times to honor each of the fire’s victims.

Here at OEM, the Safety and Health Committee and NYC Citizen Corps Council presented the PBS documentary titled *Triangle Fire: The Tragedy that Forever Changed Labor and Industry*, and discussed this pivotal moment in history that led to a transformation of the New York State Labor Code and workplace safety measures, such as

Editor’s Note

Welcome to the second quarter Sit Rep of 2011. This quarter has been one of charity and giving back. We’d like to recognize our Human Resources unit for the Dress for Success clothes drive in which 22 suits and 60 separate articles of clothing were collected. HR also ran the NY Cares Coat Drive, and the City Harvest Food Drive. Blood Donations for 2010 totaled to 126 pints collected while 33 pints have been collected for 2011. Great job guys!

Also in HR, OEM’s Cubicle Courtesy Policy has been a hot document this season. We’ve included a few highlights this issue. Our feature story takes a look at one of the deadliest industrial disasters in the history of New York City. A special thanks to Patricia Emrich from OEM’s Legal Unit for her continued contributions to the newsletter. In addition to the feature story, stop by the Legal Corner and check out her write-up on mass disaster response.

As always, the latest and the greatest in life events for OEM staffers can be found in our Milestones section while updates about office news and culture are in OEM News. Your story ideas and feedback are welcome and greatly appreciated. Please send them to Chris Varley: CVarley@OEM.NYC.GOV

fire drills, sprinklers, fire escapes, and occupant limitations.

These safety precautions are a proud heritage of New York State, as they predated federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration laws by 50 years. Tragically, they were born from the loss of life. In 1911, safety precautions and other regulations existed, but were either not legally mandated by government or not enforced.

In addition, on March 3, the NYC Citizen Corps Council hosted a meeting with local leaders from community organizations, government, the private sector, and volunteer programs to discuss the Triangle Fire and its impact on emergency preparedness. Jim Vreeland, a retired New York firefighter and historian at the New York City Fire Museum, provided an in-depth look at the fire and how it changed America. Through much research, GIS' Cheryl Justham provided detailed maps of the victims' residences within the city and their countries of origin. Even after 100 years, information about all the victims is not concrete.

For more information, please visit the [NYU Grey Art Gallery](#) for a special exhibit commemorating the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, through July 9.



Fire aftermath in the Triangle Shirtwaist factory
source: Cornell University Kheel Center

New York State Bar Association Committee on Mass Disaster Response

When the World Wide tour bus crashed in the Bronx in March, killing 15 people, a group of lawyers was among those called in to help. Lawyers are not your typical emergency responders, but lawyers with the New York State Bar Association Committee on Mass Disaster Response (MDR) are committed to helping disaster victims avoid legal pitfalls in the wake of an emergency.

The MDR was requested at the Family Assistance Center set up in Chinatown after the crash. Lawyers helped victims' families with insurance claims and referrals to reputable attorneys, advised families about their rights, and worked to protect families from being taken advantage of by unscrupulous attorneys.

A 2003 recipient of the Governor's Award for excellence in emergency management, the MDR is made up of about 20 attorneys and two mental health professionals who volunteer their time and expertise following an emergency. The committee's goal is to lessen mass disasters victims' suffering by preventing the unlawful legal solicitation of victims and their families and by providing free, short-term legal assistance to victims in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

New York law prohibits the solicitation of legal business in person or via telephone by both attorneys and "runners," people hired by an attorney to aid, assist, or abet in the solicitation of business. It is also considered unethical and a breach of professional responsibility for an attorney to solicit such business.

FERRY BOAT ACCIDENT VICTIMS

The Law Firm Of
B B M
Bosco Bisignano Mascolo

Our thoughts and prayers go out to those injured in the S.I. Ferry Boat accident of October 15, 2003.
Our Law firm has a proven track record handling Ferry Boat, Cruise Ship

Example of an illegal solicitation

The committee was formed in 1997 by the New York State Bar Association president, following pro bono assistance and legal support during the TWA Flight 800 (1996) in Long Island. Since its inception, the committee has helped families following the Amtrak crash in Syracuse (2001), the World Trade Center attacks (2001), American Airlines Flight 587 (2001), the Staten Island ferry crash (2003), the Rochester charter bus crash (2005), and the Continental Airlines Flight 3407 crash (2009), to name a few.

In addition to helping staff assistance centers, the committee also prepares written materials for victims and their families, such as "[How to Protect Your Rights When Mass Disaster Strikes](#)," anti-solicitation signs at assistance centers, and press releases for the legal community reminding attorneys of their professional responsibilities.

On behalf of our agency, OEM Legal feels privileged to have the continued assistance of the committee.

Mind Your Cubicle



Mind your cube manners, OEMers.

In the great *Offices vs. Cubicles* debate, many modern architects and designers have argued that to break down the social walls that divide people, you had to break down the real walls, too. Frank Lloyd Wright, a modernist architect, even described the division of walls and rooms as totally fascist. While cubicles were perhaps invented to facilitate open communication, enhance workplace camaraderie, and maximize office space, they have also been associated with a number of occupational nuisances.

With co-workers sitting so close together, it's no surprise cubicle etiquette is a hot topic floating around HR offices. Since the invention of these anti-wall dividers, companies have introduced countless guidelines encouraging employees to be mindful of the space they share with fellow cube dwellers. OEM's Cubicle Courtesy Policy has become quite the "it" document these days. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services even requested a copy of their own.

In case you missed the e-mail sent out in early April prompting OEMers to revisit the agency's guidelines, here are

a few highlights. And office dwellers don't get off the hook just because they have doors and walls. When your doors are open (most of the time they are), follow the same guidelines as your cubed-in colleagues.

Channel your inner librarian.

OEM is a busy, deadline-driven workplace and its employees must be able to concentrate on completing tasks without constant distraction. Be cognizant of your "indoor" voice, as it may be louder than you think.

Avoid phone faux pas. Less is more.

Develop a telephone voice by imagining how you would sound if you were sneaking a call while at the library and use that voice when speaking on the phone in your cubicle. Your cubicle is not a conference room and using speaker phone to either hold a conference call or to check your messages is never appropriate.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. – not everyone can work with music.

While you may work best with music playing at your workstation, not everyone shares the same strategy (or musical preferences). Wear headphones whenever you listen to the radio or music/video on your computer or MP3 device. And, be sure to limit humming and singing to your morning shower, commute to work, or American Idol audition!

Be a courteous "guest."

Cubicles are employees' personal spaces while at work. Just as you would never enter another person's house unannounced be sure to inquire if your colleagues have time to speak with you before stepping into their work areas. In addition, avoid congregating at someone's cubicle, leaning on the cubicle, etc. while engaging in conversation with other employees.

Have good scents.

Any group lunch activities must be conducted in the third floor lunch room. That said, be mindful of your neighbors' noses before you indulge in a pungent lunch at your desk. Also, heavy perfume or aftershave can give those nearby headaches, and some people even have perfume allergies. Finally, just because you are in your cubicle does not mean you have the freedom to take off your shoes and walk around your area barefoot.

Ask before borrowing.

Always ask for permission prior to using a colleague's stapler or raiding a co-worker's supply of paper clips. Never use someone's desktop phone without letting him or her know, as some people are more susceptible to germs than others. What may seem like no big deal to you could be regarded as bothersome or disrespectful to others.

Be mindful of cubicle décor.

Individuality is important and encouraged, but err on the side of caution when decorating your workspace. Remember, not everyone shares your sense of humor, and some cubicle décor could inadvertently offend co-workers or visitors.

When in doubt, ask.

Professionalism and courtesy are the keys to cubicle etiquette, so if you think your cubicle behavior may not be courteous, talk to your neighbors, learn their preferences, and help maintain a happy work environment.

Find the full list of OEM's Cubicle Courtesy guidelines in the W drive Common folder under Human Resources - Cubicle Courtesy. In case of questions and/or concerns, contact Annette Santiago or Stella Guarna.

External Affairs Visits the New York Stock Exchange

On April 14, members of the Public/Private and External Affairs ESFs visited the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) to meet with NYSE staff and discuss how they can work more efficiently together during EOC activations. Mitch Simon, NYSE Vice President for Business Continuity, escorted the group throughout the Exchange and explained how it functions and its business continuity plans. Thanks to Ira Tannenbaum, director of Public/Private Initiatives, for organizing the visit.



Public/Private and External Affairs ESF members at the New York Stock Exchange

OEM Executive Staff Drills With the Mayor's Office

On February 14, 2011, the OEM Training and Exercises division conducted a no-notice tabletop exercise for OEM's executive staff and Deputy Mayor Goldsmith and his staff. Following a surprise breakfast, courtesy of Commissioner Bruno, participants were presented with a scenario that involved the collapse of a major commercial building in midtown Manhattan. Grand Central Terminal, MTA's East Side Access project, and surrounding buildings were all affected.

Halfway through the exercise, participants were challenged by a second incident: the collision of a fuel barge with the George Washington Bridge. OEM's executives worked together with the deputy mayor to determine how the City would manage concurrent response and recovery operations.

Inside the Japanese Nuclear Crisis

On April 11, one month after the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan, Dr. Lawrence Dauer gave a brown bag lunch

presentation for OEM staff about the response, and health issues associated with the nuclear crisis in Japan. Dauer, a member of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center Department of Medical Physics, explained the structure of the Fukushima plant, the events immediately following the disaster, and the health risks associated with radiation exposure.

He also discussed ways the U.S. can guard against a similar nuclear crisis. Thanks to the Health and Medical unit for organizing this informative, timely, and thought-provoking lecture.

Find or Be a Volunteer Interpreter

Are you looking for a translator or interpreter? As a City employee you have access to the citywide Volunteer Language Bank (VLB). The VLB is an online database of City staff and CERT volunteers who speak languages other than English.

If you need a document to be translated into another language or reviewed, or an interpreter for an activation or other event, consider the Volunteer Language Bank.

Likewise, if you proficient in another language, consider registering your skills at the VLB. Once you receive some training, your name will go into the Volunteer Language Bank and you will receive an e-mail from the database if your skills are being requested by another City agency.

You can access the VLB at <http://vlb.cityhall.nycnet>. If you have any questions, please e-mail Kristina Corvin, OEM's language bank liaison, at kcorvin@oem.nyc.gov. Additionally, Chris Varley is one of five OEM volunteers already in the bank. If you'd like to know what it's like from the inside, stop by and ask him about it.

Notify NYC hits 1,000

Notify NYC, the City's official public notification system, sent its 1,000th message to subscribers in early April. Since the program launched citywide in May 2009, Notify NYC subscribers have received text messages, phone calls and/or e-mails about more than 875 incidents around the City. As of May 2011, there are over 67,000 Notify subscribers.

OEM News (cont'd)

Financial Planning

During March and April, the Deferred Compensation Plan hosted a variety of financial planning seminars at OEM. Seminar topics included college planning, insurance planning, money and credit, tax planning, and retirement planning, among others. If you missed the presentations at OEM, you can visit the [Deferred Compensation website](#)

for dates and times these seminars will be conducted at the Plan's offices in Manhattan. Copies of the seminar presentation slides are also available in the W drive Common folder under Human Resources - Presentations.

Commissioner Bruno Accepts GovTech Award

On May 13, Commissioner Bruno was honored at OEM as one of [Government Technology Magazine's Top 25 Doers, Dreamers and Drivers](#). Every year Government

Technology recognizes 25 people who have cut through public sector barriers to innovation and reshaped government for the better. Congratulations, Commissioner!



Baby Boom



Josephine Louisa Yoo

02/16/2011

5 lbs, 4 ozs

Born to Hans & Frances Yoo



Maxwell Christian Ragolia

03/15/2011

8 lbs, 13 ozs

Born to Michael & Ann Ragolia



Waylyn Felson Pullen

01/12/2011

4 lbs, 10 ozs

Born to Randy Pullen & Qian Zhu



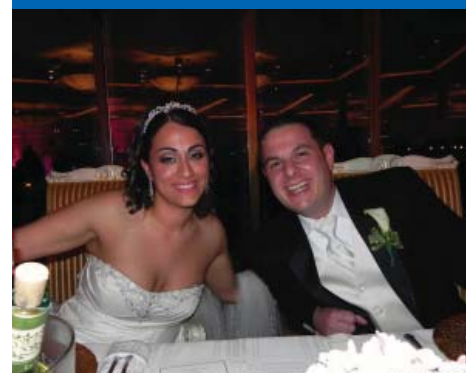
Rose Matilda Grimm

03/17/2011

8 lbs, 11 ozs

Born to John & Leslie Grimm

Milestones



Congratulations to **Onofrio DeMattia**, who married wife Apollonia on April 16, 2011. An astounding 334 guests attended the wedding ceremony at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Brooklyn.

Mariel Diaz blessed the couple with her rendition of Ave Maria. "She was perfect," says Onofrio. The reception followed at Marina del Rey in the Bronx.

The couple spent two weeks in Hawaii visiting both Maui and Oahu for their honeymoon.

In describing their special day the glowing groom explained, "Even though it rained on our wedding day, there was nothing in the world that could 'rain on our parade.' The ceremony and reception were amazing and we have never been happier."

A Word from the Spring Interns



Raza Hasan, Cross Cultural Outreach Intern (External Affairs)

Working for an organization like OEM was one of my cherished goals. During my stay, I met with dedicated, supportive, and very professional people. My major assignment was to reach out to academia and non-profits to get feedback about our English as a Second Language curriculum project. OEM has been a very congenial environment for me. Special thanks to Herman Schaffer, Kristina Corvin, and Justin Land for their support.



David Miskis, Logistics Intern

My experience here at OEM has been excellent. I will leave this internship with a rich understanding of the emergency management field and the role of logistics within disaster situations. This was an opportunity to go beyond the parameters of my graduate program. As I complete school this May, I know that the time spent here will be a deciding factor in making my job search successful.



Ida Shehu, Community Outreach Intern (CERT)

I started my internship at OEM in September 2010. Because I enjoyed working here so much, I decided to extend it to May 2011. Over the course of nine months, I had the opportunity to assist different members of my department with their own specific projects. Besides the knowledge and experience gained, I enjoyed the time I spent with co-workers the most. Everything that I have learned in my brief time here has been extremely valuable, and for that I will always be grateful.



Katherine Paul, Health and Medical Intern

I've been working with the Health and Medical Unit, primarily on the Chempack sustainment. It's been really interesting to see all of the aspects of a program like this and all of the planning that it requires. I'm looking forward to being here for the sustainment itself and to learning more about the other projects headed up by the Health and Medical unit.



Steven Ward, Legal Intern

After becoming somewhat of a "serial intern" through my past six years in higher education, I have come to appreciate one aspect of the work place that other interns sometimes overlook. For me, a great joy of working for a particular employer comes from the environment fostered by my mentors and the organization. At OEM I was immediately welcomed, and quickly formed a great relationship with the attorneys in the legal department. Needless to say, I am sad that my tenure at OEM can only last a semester.



Eric Schermerhorn, Training and Exercises Intern

As someone new to the field of public service and of emergency management, I found my time at OEM to be incredibly informative. As a Training and Exercises intern, the window into EOC activations, exercises and hot washes was invaluable—not only for the exposure to the activities, but for the people I met.

Bring Your Kid to Work Day 2011

Can you guess my mommy/daddy?

