



SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT  
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Press Release

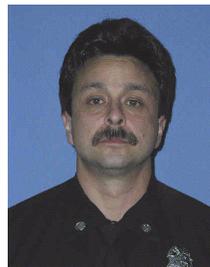
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1600 Hrs

For Immediate Release PST  
Capt. Ken Lombardi – 415-238-5271

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## San Francisco Fire Department Release of Line of Duty Death Safety Investigation Report



Lieutenant Vincent A. Perez



FF/PM Anthony M. Valerio

(San Francisco, CA – February 10, 2012) The San Francisco Fire Department held a press briefing today, reviewing the results of their Internal Safety Investigation related to the Line of Duty Deaths of Lt. Vincent Perez and Firefighter/Paramedic Anthony Valerio at a fire at 133 Berkeley Way on June 2, 2011.

Fire Investigators determined that the fire was accidental. The ignition source was “a non-specific electrical sequence”, likely caused by either a failure in a ground outlet or in the appliance connected to the outlet.

The results of the Safety Investigation determined that the two Firefighters, who died as a result of internal and external thermal injuries, were conducting fire operations in a stairwell of the home above the fire room. The stairwell acted as a chimney when a large window failed in an oxygen deprived room that was below them, “causing them exposure to a rapid high heat event at temperatures that no Firefighter would have been able to survive”, said Assistant Deputy Chief Jose Velo, a member of the Safety Investigation Team.

Inspection of the Firefighters’ Personal Protective Clothing indicated that they performed according to their specifications. “We do have some concerns related to the handheld radios that all of our Firefighters carry”, said Chief Velo. “Both radio microphones appear to have failed from exposure to extreme heat conditions.”

Upon receiving the findings related to the radios, Fire Chief Joanne Hayes-White requested that the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) research and develop a standard for Firefighter handheld radios.

The Safety Investigation Team identified three factors that contributed to the tragic outcome of this event. These factors include an excessive live fuel load which contributed to the growth of the fire, the layout of the building with the origin of the fire being in a room below grade and, extreme heat conditions accelerated by the failure of a window on the fire floor.

Chief Hayes-White indicated that this Safety Investigation was internal and initiated immediately following the rescue of the two Firefighters. Additionally, she stated that an independent Safety Investigation had also been conducted by the National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH). The NIOSH Report is pending.

“Twenty-five recommendations have been made as a result of information gathered from the Safety Investigation”, said Chief Hayes-White. “We take to heart all of the findings and recommendations in this report and will vow to do everything within our power to ensure a similar tragedy does not occur again in our Department.” The Department is in the process of implementing all recommendations and has initiated research and development where required.

President of San Francisco Fire Fighters Local 798, Tom O'Connor said, “While there is nothing that we can do to change the outcome of that fateful day, we can learn lessons from this tragedy and make every effort to ensure that this does not happen again.”

“The two brave firefighters who died tragically in the line of duty in June last year – Lieutenant Vincent Perez and Firefighter/Paramedic Anthony Valerio are heroes,” said Mayor Ed Lee. “As a city, we will follow up on every recommendation and finding from the report issued today by the San Francisco Fire Department to ensure our first responders are as safe as possible as they serve the residents of San Francisco.”

The Fire Department has forwarded their report to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Cal-OSHA, the State Fire Marshal, and the CA Professional Firefighters Association for their review.

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