

Title:

The First September 11

Word Count:

504

Summary:

September 11, 2001 was not the first time an airplane crashed into a skyscraper. Actually, such tragedies are more common than is thought.

Keywords:

Article Body:

September 11, 2001 was not the first time an airplane crashed into a skyscraper. Actually, such tragedies are more common than is thought.

On July 28, 1945, for instance, a U.S. Army B-25 bomber traveling at 200 miles (c. 370 kilometers) per hour in heavy fog crashed into the Empire State Building in New York City. Luckily it was a Saturday, though dozens were injured and 14 killed. People thought the city was being bombed:

Doris Pope, Boynton Beach, Fla. told The Palm Beach Post in 1999:

"We heard this terrible noise, and the building started to shake. ... As we looked out our third-floor window, we saw debris fall on to the street. We immediately thought New York was being bombed."

Another eyewitness, Helen J. Hurwitt, from Greenacres, Fla., told the Post:

"I heard a horrendous noise. My husband and I were in a building directly opposite the Empire State Building. ... Large plate-glass windows looked out onto 34th Street. The floor we were on was pretty high. At some point, we heard a horrendous noise and rushed to the windows. ... We were horrified to see a B-25 half in and half out of the Empire State Building."

"The building shuddered, realigned itself, and settled. Probably instantly, although several witnesses said there seemed to be a moment's interval, came the explosion, and the top of the fog-shrouded Empire State Building was briefly

seen in a bright orange glow. High-octane airplane fuel spewed out of the ruptured tanks and sprayed the building...The heat was so intense that partition frames within offices disappeared, and the shattered glass from windows and lamp fixtures melted and fused into stalactites...One engine, part of the fuselage, and a landing gear tore through the internal office walls, through two fire walls and across a stairway, through another office wall and out of the south wall of the building, with the parts coming to a fiery rest at 10 West Thirty-Third Street in the penthouse studio/apartment of sculptor Henry Hering, who was off playing golf in Scarsdale at the time"

John Tauranac, *The Making of a Landmark*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997, (originally printed in hardcover by Scribner, 1995)

One of the massive aircraft's engine crossed the entire skyscraper, from north wall to south wall, and landed on the roof of another building nearby. The damage was estimated at \$1 million (that's 1945 dollars). It took 3 months to repair the 78th and 79th floors.

But the September atrocities provoked a wave of copycats and renewed awareness of such risks.

On April 18, 2002 a small airplane ran into the 26th floor of Milan's tallest building, the Pirelli Tower. Three people were killed, dozens injured and the building was severely damaged.

On January 5, 2002, a 15-year old deliberately crashed a small, single engine, craft into the 28th floor of the Bank of America Plaza in Tampa, Florida. The pilot dies. There were no other casualties.

At the beginning of May 2002, an Indian air force jet hit crashed into a bank building in northwestern India. Eight died in the ensuing fire.