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Cambridge Transformer Explosion Investigation Conclusion: Tragic Accident

Cambridge Fire Chief Gerald R. Reardon and State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said today that their joint investigation into the December 8, 2006 transformer explosion at One Broadway in Cambridge has concluded. After completing the scene examination and interviews, including the one surviving but injured NSTAR employee, the team has concluded that the transformer explosion was a tragic accident. While they have ruled out any criminal act, at this time they are not able determine if human error, procedural error or a malfunction of safety mechanisms was the specific cause.

Two NSTAR employees were working on the transformer at the time of the explosion and one was killed and one was injured. Dozens of the building's occupants were also treated at local hospitals. Smoke penetrated the stairwells making escape from the high-rise building difficult.

The cause and origin investigation was jointly conducted by investigators from the Cambridge Fire Department, the Cambridge Police Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Assistance was received from the Mass. Department of Telecommunications and Energy and State Police assigned to the Middlesex District Attorney's Office. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration is also investigating the incident.

Code compliance officers from the Office of the State Fire Marshal and Cambridge Fire Prevention Officers have identified the point at which the smoke entered the fresh air ductwork. They have issued an order of notice to the buildings owners to hire mechanical and life safety engineers to design and implement corrective measures before the building can be re-occupied.