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Metro

Woman's fall from skylight an accident

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT SEPTEMBER 12, 2011

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Police said they believe the death of a woman who fell nearly five stories through a skylight on the roof of a South Boston office building Saturday night was accidental, and they found no indication alcohol or drugs were involved.

Officials, citing an ongoing investigation, did not say why the woman was there, what she was doing, nor whether she and other unidentified people with her were allowed on the roof, which has no deck or communal space.

“There is no indication of foul play . . . [and] no indication it was a result of drugs or alcohol,” said Boston Police spokesman Officer Eddy Chrispin.

Chrispin and Jake Wark, a spokesman for the Suffolk district attorney's office, which is also investigating the death, declined to identify the victim, who was in her early 20s, pending family

notification.

Emergency officials responded at about 8:30 p.m. Saturday to a 911 call from a friend of the woman after she fell through a seventh-story roof skylight and landed on the third floor of a dark, walled-off shaft inside 281 Summer St.

Officials cut through several walls before finding her after a more than one-hour search, said Fire Department spokesman Steve MacDonald.

The woman was pronounced dead at the scene.

Officials said they initially searched the wrong building, one that had an adjacent roof, because the friend was unable to tell responders the woman's exact location.

The lack of details about her location, coupled with darkness on the roof and in the shafts they searched, then difficulty in accessing the shaft she was in, accounted for the delay in reaching her, MacDonald said.

"It took a great deal of time to locate her," he said.

In a brief statement yesterday, New Jersey-based Normandy Real Estate Partners, which owns the property, said that it was cooperating with the investigation into the "tragic incident."

"We can't comment on an active police investigation - that's a matter for the Boston Police," the statement said.

Diane Dooley, who has worked for about six years in an office on the building's sixth floor, said when reached by phone at her Belmont home yesterday that she was unaware of the death and that she had never heard of anyone going up on the roof.

"To my knowledge, I don't know that the roof is accessible," she said.

Dooley, who works for the architectural firm DiMella Shaffer Associates, said she believed none of her colleagues would have been working Saturday night.

However, she said, "it's not uncommon for [staff of companies with offices there] to be in [the building] on weekends."

J. Kaliontzis heard sirens and saw a fire truck extending a ladder to the roof of buildings across the street from her. She said she watched from her residence's fifth-floor window as crews responded first to a building on A Street and then to 281 Summer St.

A 12-year occupant of what she said is the only residential building on either side of her Summer Street block, Kaliontzis said she's used to seeing lights on, sometimes into the overnight hours, in the office space across the street.

"It's not entirely uncommon," she said.

Neither Kaliontzis nor Dooley recognized a man pictured in Sunday's Globe after he was photographed at the scene the night before. The unidentified man, a friend of the victim, was one of two people taken from the scene in an ambulance.

Police did not say how many people were with the woman on the roof, nor did they comment on the two people who left in an ambulance.

Workers at a first-floor restaurant below the building's office space declined to comment yesterday, as did a man standing outside who said he was a maintenance employee for the facility.

A spokeswoman at the city's inspectional services department did not return messages yesterday requesting comment on whether officials there were involved in the investigation.

Travis Andersen of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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