The Basis for Appropriate Safety Levels for Tall Buildings

Safety levels are a public policy decision made by regulators and not the technical community. It is appropriate for the technical community to suggest technical justification for safety levels, performance levels that can be achieved, and their associated costs. These should serve as the basis for the public consultation process and the ultimate policy decisions of regulators. Public policy should not be dominated by the outcome of a single event but needs to reflect public expectations and societal objectives, realizing that these may be influenced by a single event of sufficient magnitude.

This presentation will discuss the unique characteristics of tall buildings that influence the decision on safety levels for structural safety, fire safety, and emergency egress (of occupants, including those with disabilities) and access (by those who may be responding to emergencies of various types). These are presented in the context of the findings and recommendations of the NIST World Trade Center Investigation with regard to recommended changes to Codes, Standards, and Practices.