

Debunking 9/11 Debunking: On WTC's Design to Withstand 707 Impact

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3/4/2013

The video *9/11 Debunked: On WTC's Design to Withstand 707 Impact*,¹ by RKOWens4, the page *WTC 707 Impact*,² at 911myths.com, and the *First time in history* page³ at Debunking911.com, all make the case, based on statements from Leslie Robertson, that the Twin Towers were only designed to survive a low speed, jet fuel free, impact from an airliner.

First off, it's important to note that "debunkers" are spewing bunkum with their description of Robertson as the "lead structural engineer" of the Twin Towers.

As AE911Truth contributing writer Gregg Roberts notes:

John Skilling... hired Robertson and is described in media accounts and books as the "lead," "head," or "chief" structural engineer on the World Trade Center project.

In a 1993 *Seattle Times* article, Skilling was described as the head structural engineer. Robertson was not mentioned there, nor in an article in the *Engineering News-Record* that discussed the design in 1964. In *City in the Sky*, Robertson is called the "rising young engineer with Skilling's firm" (p. 159). In *Men of Steel*, Robertson is referred to during the design phase as "one of the up-and-coming engineers on [Skilling's] staff," Skilling's "young associate," whom Skilling "assigned... to help him prepare a proposal" to the Port Authority's board. Skilling's firm was named Worthington, Skilling, Helle, and Jackson. Clearly, Skilling was a senior partner at the firm and Robertson was his subordinate. The tallest building his firm had designed before then was 22 stories tall. It hardly seems likely that he sat back and smoked cigars while the 34-year-old Robertson – who at the beginning of the project had a bachelor's only in science and not in engineering – went off and designed the Towers without supervision. The project would clearly have had Skilling's full attention.⁴

The following bit from the article *The World Trade Center Building Designers: Pre-9/11 claims strongly implicate that the Towers should have remained standing on 9/11*,⁵ found at arabesque911.blogspot.com, illustrates why this information about John Skilling is important:

Surprisingly, Robertson claimed that the WTC Towers were designed to survive plane crashes at speeds of **180 mph**... However, these statements are contradicted by Skilling, who indicated that "a previous analysis, carried out early in 1964, calculated that the towers would handle the impact of a 707 traveling **at 600 mph without collapsing.**" Robertson is also somewhat contradicted by his own statement in 1984-5 that there was "**little likelihood of a collapse no matter how the building was attacked.**"

911myths.com also covers this contradiction, quoting the government investigators into the WTC destruction at NIST, who stated that “newly disclosed documents, from the 1960’s, show that the Port Authority considered aircraft moving at 600 m.p.h., slightly faster and therefore more destructive than the ones that did hit the towers.”⁶

There have been several calculations⁷ done that show that a 707, which is very similar in overall size, weight and fuel capacity to the 767s used on 9/11,⁸ would have contained more kinetic energy than a 767 when traveling at this speed.

Debunking911.com states that conspiracy theorists “show an interview with a construction manager who said the buildings steel skin should have held up by redistributing the load. He’s right. This is EXACTLY what the NIST said happened. It wasn’t the impact alone which the NIST said brought down the towers.” The aforementioned article at arabesque911.blogspot.com better explains this issue, but we’ll get to that later. The interview in question shows the WTC construction manager Frank DeMartini making the following statements:

The building was designed to have a fully loaded 707 crash into it. That was the largest plane at the time. I believe that the building probably could sustain multiple impacts of jetliners because this structure is like the mosquito netting on your screen door -- this intense grid -- and the jet plane is just a pencil puncturing that screen netting. It really does nothing to the screen netting.⁹

DeMartini appeared to be so confident that the towers would not collapse that he stayed behind to help save at least 50 people. As a result of his actions, he lost his life on 9/11. DeMartini was without a doubt a hero who, like the firefighters, may very well have knowingly risked his life to save others, but the evidence indicates that he did not think he was endangering himself by simply going back in the building.

As Professor Graham MacQueen has pointed out “the lives of hundreds of firefighters had been wagered on the experience of fire chiefs who never suspected collapse... [members of the FDNY] had almost certainly been told... that planes could not cause the Towers to collapse.”¹⁰

No matter says 911myths, because “there’s no indication that the design considered the effects of the fire.” Debunking911.com states, “While it’s true they were designed to withstand the impact of a smaller 707, they never factored in the removal of fire proofing or fuel in the wings.” 911myths.com adds, “And of course this matters, because the towers did withstand the impact: it’s claimed that the combination of that damage and the resulting fires is what brought them down.” At least RKOWens4 admits that “it may seem counter-intuitive that the effects of a fire wouldn't be considered.”

This adverse to common sense claim again comes from Robertson and is contradicted by Skilling. In the article *Debunking the Real 9/11 Myths: Why Popular Mechanics Can't Face up to Reality - Part 1*,¹¹ Debunking the Debunkers blog contributor Adam Taylor writes:

PM [Popular Mechanics]... quotes WTC assistant structural engineer Leslie Robertson as stating that the Towers were only designed to take the impact of a Boeing 707, but did not take into consideration the fires that would be produced by the jet fuel.

After 9/11, Robertson stated, “I don’t know if we considered the fire damage that would cause” (pg. 31).

However, someone evidently did consider that problem, and that someone was John Skilling, the original WTC lead engineer. When interviewed in 1993, Skilling told the Seattle Times that:

“We looked at every possible thing we could think of that could happen to the buildings, even to the extent of an airplane hitting the side... Our analysis indicated the biggest problem would be the fact that all the fuel (from the airplane) would dump into the building. There would be a horrendous fire. A lot of people would be killed. [But] the building structure would still be there.”

Although PM mentions John Skilling briefly in their book, they make no mention of this statement. Apparently, PM felt no need to quote the lead WTC engineer on his views about the structural stability of the Towers.

911myths.com,¹² Debunking911.com,¹³ and RKOWens4 do not even acknowledge Skilling’s existence, much less mention this statement.

It’s important to point out here that the paper *Other Collapses in Perspective: An Examination of Other Steel Structures Collapsing due to Fire and their Relation to the WTC*, also by Adam Taylor, proves the following conclusion. If you think not, you let us know.

When we recognize how much fuel actually remained in the buildings, we can instantly see how ludicrous it is to compare the Towers to these other steel structures [that have collapsed due to fires]. How can it possibly be justifiable to compare the Towers, which each had only about 3000 gallons of jet fuel remain on the fire floors, to structures like the Mumbai High Platform, which likely had over 1,000,000 gallons of oil to fuel the fires, or the Interstate 580, which had 8600 gallons of gasoline fueling the fires below it? Likewise, the heat from these fires has been greatly disputed. As we have already seen, NIST has no evidence of high temperatures in either building. Their estimates of 482 °F as the highest temperature the steel in the buildings reached is consistent with estimates of the maximum temperatures reached by the jet fuel fires.¹⁴

Speaking again to the trustworthiness of Robertson, beyond his having “made claims that are contradicted by statements and documents from as many as 40 years ago,” the aforementioned article at arabesque911.blogspot.com notes that:

Robertson said the following in an interview with Steven Jones in October 2006:

“...Yes there was a red hot metal seen [in the WTC rubble] by engineers. Molten—Molten means flowing—I’ve never run across anyone who has said that they had in fact seen molten metal, or by the way if they had seen it, if they had performed some kind of an analysis to determine what that metal was.”

The statement about molten metal is also contradicted by many eyewitness statements. In fact, it is possible that Robertson himself saw this molten steel, but this fact is not confirmed at the present time.

Robertson’s above statement was made in 2006.¹⁵ Confirmation of Robertson’s disingenuousness came in 2011, in which a video released by the International Center for 9/11 Studies showed Robertson in 2002 stating that he saw “like a little river of steel flowing” in the basements of the towers.¹⁶

Then we have the assessment of structural engineer Charlie Thornton, who stated in a 1988 interview that:

13,000 tons is a lot of force. People always talk about an airplane crashing into a building. And in 1944 or 45 a plane did crash into the Empire State Building. But the largest aircraft flying today, at least commercially, the **747, fully loaded**, is on the order of 300 tons. So if you think about a 300 ton element crashing into a building that’s been designed to carry 13,000 tons you can see that **an aircraft crashing into the World Trade Center would probably not do anything to the major building.** It could affect localized structural elements, could knock out a column, and there could be some damage. **But as far as plane knocking a building over of that type, that would not happen.**¹⁷

Thornton has now adopted Leslie Robertson’s debunked explanations and was a member of NIST oversight committee for the investigation.¹⁸ A NIST investigation demonstrated to have been a deceptive, unscientific, obstructive partial investigation, with per-determined conclusions.¹⁹

The only thing the so-called debunkers have left is the assertion that “they never factored in the removal of fire proofing.” This is likely true but utterly inconsequential, as the notion that airplane strikes like those on 9/11 could or did cause widely dislodged fireproofing has been thoroughly debunked. While noting that NIST itself claims that the towers would likely have remained standing had the fireproofing not been widely dislodged,²⁰ Kevin Ryan points out that:

[NIST’s] test for fireproofing loss, never inserted in the draft reports, involved shooting a total of fifteen rounds from a shotgun at non-representative samples in a plywood box. Flat steel plates were used instead of column samples, and no floor deck samples were tested at all. In the end, they slid the results into a 12 page appendix to the final report.

Unfortunately, it's not hard to see that these tests actually disproved their findings. One reason is that there is no evidence that a Boeing 767 could transform into any number of shotgun blasts. Nearly 100,000 blasts would be needed based on NIST's own damage estimates, and these would have to be directed in a very symmetrical fashion to strip the columns and floors from all sides. However, it is much more likely that the aircraft debris was a distribution of sizes from very large chunks to a few smaller ones, and that it was directed asymmetrically.²¹

Kevin Ryan's assertion that "it is much more likely that the aircraft debris was a distribution of sizes from very large chunks to a few smaller ones" is well grounded, as he demonstrates elsewhere. In discussing Purdue University's computer simulation of Flight 11's impact into the North Tower,²² Kevin Ryan points out that:

In one important way this new animation does reflect reality, although in doing so it negates the official stance taken by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). In their September 2005 report, NIST presented their "collapse initiation sequence", and explained how they felt the loss of fireproofing was the key to the destruction of the towers. NIST suggested that the fireproofing loss occurred as a result of aircraft debris, in the form of shotgun-like blasts, scraping the fireproofing off of thousands of square meters of surface area. But from Purdue's new animation, we can clearly see that the aircraft that impacted the WTC tower could not have been instantly transformed into thousands of tiny pellets in the form of shotgun blasts. The animation more realistically displays the large fragments of debris from the fuselage clattering around in the skeletal framework of the tower. For this reason we must thank Purdue for this visualization that negates NIST's primary explanation.²³

Indeed, the notion that the airplane debris remained in sizeable fragments is supported not only by Purdue's animation, but also by photos of large pieces of debris and the testimony of survivors from the buildings. Stanley Praitnath, a survivor from the South Tower, notes in his account of escaping from the building that:

The plane impacts. I try to get up and then I realize that I'm covered up to my shoulder in debris. And when I'm digging through under all this rubble, I can see the bottom wing starting to burn, and that wing is wedged 20 feet in my office doorway.²⁴



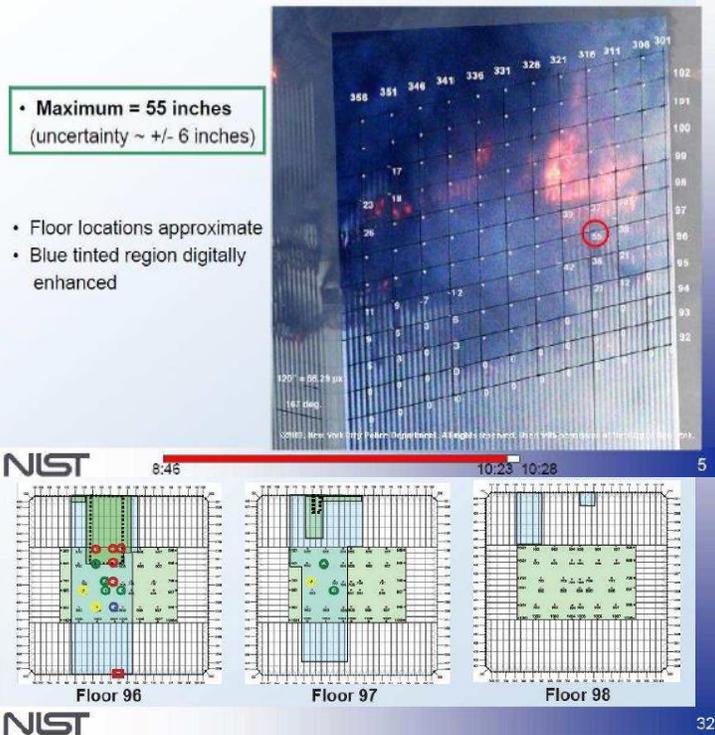
Fuselage sections from Flight 11 (source: <http://wtcdebris.0catch.com/>)



Fuselage section from Flight 175 (source: <http://wtcdebris.0catch.com/>)

But even if we assume NIST's estimates are correct, their own modeling appears to contradict their conclusions. The inward bowing of the perimeter columns was said to be the cause of the collapses. However, in the case of WTC1, the maximum inward bowing occurred in the area of the building where, according to NIST's estimates, *the fireproofing was completely untouched.*

South Face of WTC1 - 10:23 a.m. Inward bowing



Images from: Observations for Structural Response—Structural and Fire Protection Damage Due to Aircraft Impact, by Therese McAllister
<http://www.nist.gov/el/disasterstudies/wtc/upload/6McAllister.pdf> (Note: The blue areas indicate dislodged fireproofing.)

As we can see, the maximum inward bowing appeared to occur on the southeast face of the building at floor 97, where NIST's diagrams indicate that no fireproofing was dislodged. This

clearly contradicts NIST's premise that the building would likely have remained standing had the fireproofing not been knocked off by the impact.²⁵

It's notable that in the book *The World Trade Center: A Tribute*, the author notes the following of the rebuilding of Ground Zero: "In a poll conducted among leading architects by *The New York Times*, there is no consensus among them about what they would do if hired. Robert A.M. Stern, for one, was adamant that nothing less than literal rebuilding of the towers would do."²⁶ He obviously thought these structures to be superb, minus the jet fuel and loss of the fireproofing, but as we've seen, such an assumption is unfounded.

When mechanical engineer Tony Szamboti was tossed a debunking argument made from time to time regarding the construction of the towers, he responded:

It is hard to understand where you might have gotten your information that tube within a tube design for tall buildings was discontinued after 911, as both the new One World Trade Center and the new WTC7 are of that type of design. The one difference between these new buildings and those they replaced is that they have concrete cores. However, this could not have been done to correct any flaw in the original Twin Towers from the perspective of the NIST report, as they said the problem occurred due to bowing of the exterior wall, and One World Trade Center uses the same design as that of the original with a steel moment frame exterior and horizontal steelwork supporting open space floors between it and the central core.²⁷

The NIST investigators have made it clear that the fireproofing was an essential element of their collapse hypothesis.

"The reason the towers collapsed is because the fireproofing was dislodged," says Shyam Sunder, lead investigator for the NIST building and fire safety investigation into the disaster. If the fireproofing had remained in place, Sunder says, the fires would have burned out and moved on without weakening key elements to the point of structural collapse.²⁸

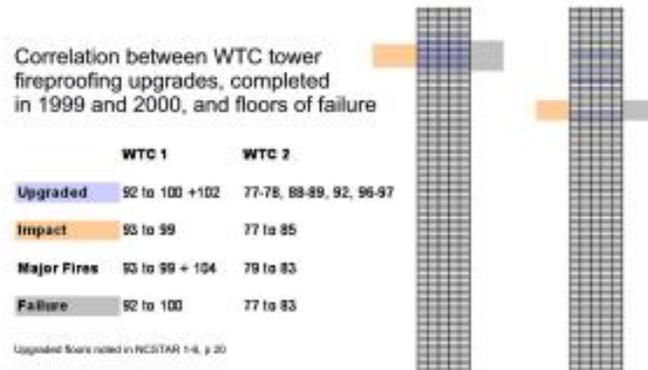
But according to Richard Humenn, the original chief WTC electrical design engineer:

The main floor supports were trusses. It would have been virtually impossible to encase them in concrete, which is the normal fire-proofing method, so they use the spray-on fire-proofing. Some of it could have been knocked off when the planes hit, but only locally. I'm sure there were fires from the furniture, carpets, paper, etc. that continued to burn after the jet fuel was burned up, but they would not reach a temperature [sufficient] to severely damage any structural members.²⁹

And as noted by Kevin Ryan:

At the time of the 9/11 attacks, the WTC towers were undergoing a fireproofing upgrade to better ensure the buildings' fire resistance. In an incredible coincidence, the floors

where the full fireproofing upgrades had been completed were the same floors that were struck by the aircraft on 9/11.



The true condition of the fireproofing in the WTC towers at the time of impact has been misrepresented by supporters of the official account. These official account supporters produce old photos of the fireproofing condition prior to the upgrades. What they don't tell you is that the upgraded fireproofing, for example on the impact floors of the north tower, was measured before the attacks and found to be 3.25 inches thick. This was twice what was required by the NYC code. What's more, inspectors found that the adhesion, or bond strength, of the newly installed fireproofing was twice as high as what was required.

How did this newly installed, superior fireproofing in the towers get "widely dislodged" as proposed by NIST?³⁰

The truth is simply inescapable: the Twin Towers should not have collapsed from the plane impacts and fires.

See also: FAQ #9: Were the Twin Towers Designed to Survive the Impact of the Airplanes?
<http://www.ae911truth.org/en/news-section/41-articles/655-faq-9-were-the-twin-towers-designed-to-survive-the-impact-of-the-airplanes.html>

References:

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- ² WTC 707 Impact, by Mike Williams (webmaster) http://www.911myths.com/html/wtc_707_impact.html
- ³ First time in history, author anonymous <http://debunking911.com/firsttime.htm>
- ⁴ Jones V. Robertson: A physicist and a structural engineer debate the controlled demolition of the World Trade Center, by Gregg Roberts, pg. 3 http://www.journalof911studies.com/volume/200704/Roberts_AnnotatedJones-RobertsonTranscript.pdf
- ⁵ The World Trade Center Building Designers: Pre-9/11 claims strongly implicate that the Towers Should have Remained Standing on 9/11, by Arabesque <http://arabesque911.blogspot.com/2007/05/world-trade-center-building-designers.html>
- ⁶ New Evidence Is Reported That Floors Failed on 9/11, by James Glanz <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/03/nyregion/03TOWE.html>
- ⁷ See for example: Comments on the World Trade Center Demolition, author anonymous <http://911research.wtc7.net/mirrors/guardian2/wtc/wtc-demolition.htm>; Not So Deep Impact, by Dean Jackson <http://www.dnotice.org/>; The Sustainability of the Controlled Demolition Hypothesis for the Destruction of the Twin Towers, by Tony Szamboti, pg. 4 <http://www.journalof911studies.com/volume/200704/SzambotiSustainabilityofControlledDemolitionHypothesisForDestructionofTwinTowers.pdf>
- ⁸ Towers' Design Parameters, by Jim Hoffman (webmaster) <http://911research.wtc7.net/wtc/analysis/design.html>
- ⁹ Mr. DeMartini can be seen making these statements in this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pvEge5HPJU>
- ¹⁰ Waiting for Seven: WTC 7 Collapse Warnings in the FDNY Oral Histories, by Graeme MacQueen, pg. 7 <http://www.journalof911studies.com/volume/200701/MacQueenWaitingforSeven.pdf>
- ¹¹ Debunking the Real 9/11 Myths: Why Popular Mechanics Can't Face up to Reality - Part 1, by Adam Taylor <http://www.ae911truth.org/en/news-section/41-articles/604-debunking-the-real-911-myths-why-popular-mechanics-cant-face-up-to-reality-part-1.html>
- ¹² See: <http://911myths.com/index.php/Special:Search?search=John+Skilling&fulltext=Search>
- ¹³ See: http://www.google.com/search?q=site%3A911research.wtc7.net+john+skilling&qfront=john+skilling#hl=en&tbo=d&scient=psy-ab&q=site:debunking911.com+john+skilling&oq=site:debunking911.com+john+skilling&gs_l=serp.3...8410.13374.0.13809.16.16.0.0.0.214.1709.9j6j1.16.0.les%3B..0.0...1c.1.2.serp.hwyzup_W7HM&pbx=1&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&bvm=bv.41867550.d.dmQ&fp=4f87d28683822bd8&biw=1280&bih=610
- ¹⁴ Other Collapses in Perspective: An Examination of Other Steel Structures Collapsing Due to Fire and Their Relation to the WTC, by Adam Taylor, pg. 22 <http://citizenfor911truth.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/otherbuildingcollapses-1.pdf>
- ¹⁵ Robertson can be heard making these statements in this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMZ38mY31cM#t=4m28s>
- ¹⁶ See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjmHqES_It0

¹⁷ Charlie Thornton can be seen making these statements in this video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8Z_X8xgrF8 (emphasis added)

¹⁸ See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2jAgp1sIFM>

¹⁹ The literature detailing the flaws in the NIST WTC report is vast. However, the very best critiques of the report are as follows; Building a Better Mirage: NIST's 3-Year \$20,000,000 Cover-Up of the Crime of the Century, by Jim Hoffman <http://911research.wtc7.net/essays/nist/index.html>; The NIST WTC Investigation--How Real Was The Simulation?, by Eric Douglas <http://www.journalof911studies.com/volume/200612/NIST-WTC-Investigation.pdf>; Review of 'A New Standard For Deception: The NIST WTC Report' A Presentation by Kevin Ryan, by Jim Hoffman http://911research.wtc7.net/reviews/kevin_ryan/newstandard.html; Falsifiability and the NIST WTC Report: A Study in Theoretical Adequacy, by Anonymous and F. Legge <http://www.journalof911studies.com/volume/2010/Falsifiability.pdf>; How NIST Avoided a Real Analysis of the Physical Evidence of WTC Steel, by Andrea Dreger http://www.ae911truth.org/documents/How_NIST_Avoided_a_Real_Analysis_of_the_Physical_Evidence_of_WTC_Steel.pdf

²⁰ "The WTC towers likely would not have collapsed under the combined effects of aircraft impact and damage and the extensive, multi-floor fires if the thermal insulation had not been widely dislodged or had been minimally dislodged by aircraft impact." Quoted from: NIST NCSTAR 1, pg. xxxviii http://www.nist.gov/manuscript-publication-search.cfm?pub_id=909017

²¹ What is 9/11 Truth?—The First Steps, by Kevin Ryan, pg. 2-3
http://www.journalof911studies.com/articles/Article_1_Ryan5.pdf

²² Purdue creates scientifically based animation of 9/11 attack
<https://news.uns.purdue.edu/x/2007a/070612HoffmannWTC.html> (Note that in their press release, Purdue University describes the simulation as "[having] a realism never seen before.")

²³ Letter to Purdue President Córdova, by Kevin Ryan <http://stj911.org/ryan/PurdueLetter.html>

²⁴ Accounts from the South Tower
<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/26/nyregion/26STOWER.html?pagewanted=all> (There is also a recorded phone interview with Stanley Praitnath online in which he discusses seeing intact portions of the plane in the building: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRwNJmQw1MY>)

²⁵ For a detailed explanation of what else could have caused this inward bowing to occur, see: The Sustainability of the Controlled Demolition Hypothesis for the destruction of the Twin Towers, by Tony Szamboti, pg. 5-6

²⁶ The World Trade Center: A Tribute, by Bill Harris, *Courage Books*; 1st edition (November 2001), pg. 90

²⁷ From email correspondence with Tony Szamboti.

²⁸ Dislodged fireproofing felled Twin Towers, by Giles Hewitt
<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2005/04/06/1339199.htm>

²⁹ WTC Chief Electrical Design Engineer Calls for New 9/11 Investigation: An Exclusive Interview with Richard Humenn, P.E.E., by Mike Bondi <http://www.ae911truth.org/en/news-section/41-articles/643-wtc-chief-electrical-design-engineer-calls-for-new-911-investigation-an-exclusive-interview-with-richard-humenn-pee.html>

³⁰ Are Tall Buildings Safer As a Result of the NIST WTC Reports? by Kevin Ryan
<http://digwithin.net/2012/09/07/are-tall-buildings-safer/>

Also by the authors:

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