

# THE BROOKLYN BANNER

## **Deadly fire draws attention to factory conditions**

George Marlowe,  
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A day after the devastating March 25<sup>th</sup> fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory, new details continue to roll in.

600 employees arrived for work that Saturday morning, but 145 of those souls—mostly young, immigrant women—never left. As authorities continue to investigate the incident, it is becoming increasingly clear that most of those deaths could have been prevented.

Factory workers report that only one of the factory's four elevators was functioning that day, and it could only be reached by a narrow corridor—ensuring that most would never be able to reach it.

The factory had two stairwells that led to the street, but the factory owners, concerned about theft, locked one of the exits from the outside. This left scores of victims trapped in the stairways as the fire raged.

The fire is reported to have started in a rag bin and a manager attempted to extinguish it. However, the hose was in such a state of disrepair that it was useless in dousing the growing blaze.

The fire found fuel in the shirtwaists hanging on lines over the rows of sewing machines and in the scraps of fabric littering the ground.

Panic spread as workers struggled to flee the cramped factory floors. Disastrously narrow aisles, created by too many sewing machines packed too closely together, made hasty exits impossible.

These negligent decisions by factory management combined to create one of the most deadly fires in New York City's history.

It remains to be seen what practical effects this tragedy will have on the laws regulating working conditions in factories, but the fire has drawn the eyes of the nation and already factory owners and politicians alike are feeling pressure to clean up their business practices.

Workers' unions have already planned a march for April 5<sup>th</sup>, with tens of thousands expected to attend. Perhaps this will help bring an end to the criminal recklessness in the garment and other industries.