

Ghost Ship Warehouse Fire - A Case Study

California Association of Code Enforcement Officers
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ATTORNEYS

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On December 2, 2016 at 11:20 PM, a fire sparked by faulty electrical wiring started at a warehouse located at 1305 31st Avenue in the Fruitvale District of Oakland, CA. Known as the "Ghost Ship," the warehouse housed musicians and artists without proper permits, and on the night of the fire was hosting a techno-music event on the second floor, also without a permit. By the time the fire was extinguished eight hours later, 36 victims had lost their lives in the fire, making the Ghost Ship tragedy one of the largest mass casualty events due to fire in the history of the State of California.

This case study will utilize documents and information available to the public to examine the events prior to December 2, 2016, when code enforcement, police, fire, and other city and state agencies had opportunities to address the systemic code violations at the Ghost Ship, but due to a myriad of factors failed to act. Rather than seeking to place blame on past actions, this case study will honor the memory of the 36 victims of the Ghost Ship fire by examining lessons learned to guide best practices for all code enforcement personnel moving forward, to ensure that such a tragedy never befalls another community.

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