



# September 11, 2001: Twin Towers Destroyed

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Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

In what is being equated with the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor in its devastating magnitude of death and destruction, Tuesday, September 11, 2001 will be a date infamously linked with the worst act of terrorism to ever touch American soil.

Countless numbers of lives and the New York City skyline have been horrifically altered by a terrorist attack that totally destroyed the World Trade Center Twin Towers after two hijacked airline jets crashed into the 110-story buildings. A third hijacked jet was intentionally plunged into the Pentagon 15 minutes before the first of the Twin Towers caved in and collapsed.

Two hijacked commercial airline jets were flown directly into The World Trade Center Twin Towers, located in Battery Park City in Lower Manhattan, on Tuesday morning in what is being described as a terrorist suicide mission. The North Tower was hit at approximately 8:45 a.m. near the 80th floor, and the South Tower was hit near the 70th floor at approximately 9:03 a.m.

As of yesterday morning, much of New York City was paralyzed by the attacks and many schools and businesses were shut down.

Both Trade Center towers had huge, gaping holes from which flames, smoke and debris poured out for hours after the crashes. A third hijacked jet subsequently crashed into the Pentagon at approximately 9:45 a.m. A fourth jet crashed approximately 80 miles outside of Pittsburgh at 10:10 a.m.

Then, one hour after the first crash, the North Tower collapsed on itself at 10 a.m. and the South Tower collapsed approximately one half-hour later at 10:30 a.m. Both towers crumbled into piles of rubble, sending shattered glass and a thick cloud of smoke, debris and soot billowing into the streets of Lower Manhattan for hours, covering cars and people trapped in its blinding wake with silt and dust.

Although numerous of employees were evacuated after the initial plane crashes, eyewitness accounts from the streets below reported, on the major news stations, seeing people plunge out of upper-story windows, to their death, from the fiery floors above.

Thousands of terrified people ran frantically from the impenetrable cloud of smoke that enveloped the entire tip of Lower Manhattan after the buildings collapsed.

Hundreds of passengers aboard the four airplanes were immediately presumed dead, and thousands of New York City and Pentagon employees were injured. More than 50,000 people work in the World Trade Center and over 200,000 people travel through the towers on a daily basis. It is estimated that approximately 24,000 people work at the Pentagon.

As of Tuesday night, there were no official figures on the number of fatalities, although city officials estimated the number of casualties would be high due to the hundreds of emergency personnel in and around the buildings at the time of the collapses. As of 10:30 p.m. on Tuesday, more than 600 firefighters and New York City police were still missing. New York City hospitals were filled with the injured, including victims with third-degree burns, smoke inhalation and many eye injuries from shattered, falling glass and debris.

New York Governor George Pataki and Acting Governor of New Jersey Donald T. DiFrancesco declared states of emergency, respectively, in order to have the power to summon the National Guard and other emergency personnel.

Thousands of emergency workers, including all police, fire and rescue squad workers were summoned to duty. Emergency workers from New Jersey were allowed to enter New York City to assist in containing the disaster.

Thousands of New Jersey commuters were trapped in New York City when bridges and tunnels were closed and

most forms of public transportation were suspended for the remainder of the day. Many of those evacuated were advised by emergency personnel to wait inside nearby buildings until the smoke and falling debris settled. Rescue workers escorted the evacuated workers to Battery City Park, where tugboats, ferries and local cruise boats transported the shaken commuters across the Hudson River to Hoboken and Jersey City to other forms of transportation to various parts of New Jersey.

For most of the day, telephone service in and out of New York City was inoperable as the system was over-burdened with calls from concerned family and friends, who anxiously awaited word on the whereabouts of their loved ones. Cell phone service in and out of the city worked intermittently or not at all at varying times.

The major network news stations, which transmit from the towers, including ABC, NBC and CBS, went off the air for several minutes immediately following the plane crashes and had interruptions in service for several hours. Emergency telephone numbers were announced on the networks for information about family and friends who worked in the Trade Center or who were passengers aboard the affected flights.

As of 11:15 p.m. on Tuesday, there were network reports of cell phone calls coming from inside the towers from survivors trapped under the debris. Many bodies were also pulled from the debris throughout the day, but exact numbers were not given.

The identity of the terrorists responsible for the attacks has not yet been confirmed by Tuesday night, but govern-

ment sources reported that the Afghanistan Taliban, linked to Muslim terrorist leader Osama bin Laden claimed responsibility for the disasters.

He has also reportedly met with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad regarding their common hatred of the United States.

Several months ago, bin Laden was quoted as saying that he would exact "extreme vengeance" and retribution on the United States for political actions in the past.

Congressman James Moran of Virginia was quoted on a news Website as saying that he had learned at a Washington briefing that the fourth jet appeared to be headed for the Presidential retreat Camp David in Maryland, when it crashed 85 miles short of its intended target. Rumors that the government ordered the hijacked plane to be shot down were denied by the State Department.

Although Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stopped short of declaring this an "act of war," when questioned on television by ABC reporters, President George W. Bush said that these horrible acts would not go unpunished once it was determined who was responsible.

Aircraft carriers were deployed off the East and West Coasts of the United States as a security measure, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Henry H. Shelton said, "the Armed Forces are ready to go." Most State Department buildings, including the White House, the Capitol, the Pentagon, the Supreme Court and many other government buildings in Washington, D.C. and in New York City were evacuated.

The collapse of the Twin Towers, which housed many administrative offices for international world banks and other financial institutions, forced the New York City Stock Exchange to close. Other stock exchanges worldwide followed suit as a precautionary measure.

Portions of the Pentagon, one of the largest buildings in the world and the seat of the Defense Department, collapsed after flames burned out of control for

several hours. World Trade Tower no. 7 also collapsed, presumed to have been caused by associated fire.

The construction of the Trade Center began in 1966 and was completed in 1972. The towers were 1,368 feet tall — the tallest buildings in city and the third largest in the world. They housed many administrative offices of the world's largest, international banks and investment firms, including the offices of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter. The towers were also the home of a 427,000-square-foot retail space known as The Mall, which was occupied by retailers such as The Gap, J. Crew, Banana Republic and The Limited. The towers also housed numerous museums, restaurants, hotels and a rooftop observatory. The world-renown Windows on the World restaurant occupied the North Tower's 107th floor.

In an unprecedented move by the Federal Aviation Administration, airports throughout the nation were shut down and all commercial airline flights were ordered to land at the nearest airport.

Many municipal buildings in New York and New Jersey also closed to allow employees an opportunity to locate family members who were still trapped in New York. Most local schools remained open with counselors on hand to support students that were traumatized by the day's events. Many local students who have parents that work in New York were summoned to their school's guidance offices to be counseled and to ensure that they were released home to either a parent or emergency contact person at the close of the school day. Several local churches held or will hold special prayer services for those who were affected by the tragedies.

There is no word yet on the number of local families that will be seriously affected by the tragic events.

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This article is reprinted from the September 13, 2001 edition of The Westfield Leader.



READY FOR DELIVERY...Representatives of Garwood took a ride out to Ephrata, Pa. last week to see the borough's new rescue platform ladder truck as its in the process of getting lettered and ready for its delivery this November. Pictured, from left to right, are: Fire Commissioner Richard McCormack, Mayor Sara Todisco, Fire Chief Allan Tweedle, Lieutenant Jim Gregory, and Assistant Fire Chief John Scalzadonna.



FIRST AID TRAINING...Fanwood Firefighter Ken Gorman demonstrates the use of a Scott breathing pack to babysitting and junior first-responder classes at Fanwood-based Little Hearts Big World Instructional Services.



ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL...Westfield Third Ward Councilman Mark LoGrippe meets with third ward supporter Lucretia Hogan.



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