

SEPTEMBER 11 OUR DARKEST DAY... A DECADE OF CHANGE

September 11: Ten Years Later

The first images of the planes striking the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the smoke rising from the Pentagon will be etched in the minds of all Americans for the rest of their lives.

Unquestionably, the September 11 terrorist attack on U.S. soil was a tragedy on a scale no one had ever seen and an event that changed the nation forever.

The IAFF response began just seconds after the first plane hit the World Trade Center. As thousands ran down the stairwells of the twin towers, members of the Uniformed Firefighters Association (UFA) Local 94 and Uniformed Fire Officers Association Local 854 responded with incredible courage, losing 343 of their own in the rescue efforts. At the Pentagon, hundreds more IAFF members from locals around the Washington, DC metropolitan area battled the flames and risked their lives to pull victims from the rubble. Other

IAFF members assisted in the efforts in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Like so many, September 11, 2001, began like any other Tuesday morning at IAFF headquarters in Washington. Ten years later, few can recall that morning without remarking how blue and cloudless the sky was. Many IAFF staff members were already at the office two blocks from the White House, and several were in a meeting with General President Harold

Schaitberger, who had been in his position as General President for just one year when the attacks began at 8:46 a.m.

The staff was stunned by the horrifying images unfolding live on televisions all over the world. Shaking themselves free from the television footage, President Schaitberger and his staff immediately began to formulate a response to help members — and the nation — in any and every way possible.



David Billy, IAFF Political Director, was on Capitol Hill with Dave Lang, president of the Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire. They were escorting New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen, who was also a U.S. Senate candidate, through a series of labor meetings:

"We saw smoke rising from the Pentagon. We were on our way to the Communications Workers of America office. Traffic had become gridlocked as people tried to leave the city. There's a district office of the FBI across the street from the CWA building. We saw guys with machine guns on the street. While at CWA, the governor had a call with the New Hampshire state police as the state has a nuclear power plant and was concerned about a possible attack. During the call, the state police asked us to stay with the governor until they were able to come to DC to get her.





A decade later, the IAFF, though still mournful of the fallen, stands much stronger than on September 10, 2001.

In the days and weeks after, the IAFF faced the greatest challenge in its history, but rose to that challenge at every level — providing financial and other assistance to survivors, counseling support to fire fighters and their families, and staff support to Local 94 and Local 854.

The IAFF's focus was to help those who were lost or missing and their families — as well as the Local 94 and Local 854 members digging through the pile searching for survivors.

Immediately, the IAFF committed the full resources of the International to support Local 94 and Local 854 and to the affiliates in Virginia, Maryland and District of Columbia that responded to the Pentagon.

General President Schaitberger visited the Pentagon just hours after it was hit, and later — along with then-General Secretary-Treasurer Vincent Bollon — drove to Ground Zero with other IAFF staff to establish an IAFF command center there. The IAFF reserved an entire floor of rooms indefinitely at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers in Midtown Manhattan — nearly impossible on any other day, but few tourists were booking reservations in the days after September 11.

To the Rescue

The IAFF staffed the office in New York, providing administrative and logistical help to Locals 94 and 854. In addition, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams comprised of IAFF members from across the country came to New York to help provide grief counseling. These efforts continue today as part of the FDNY Counseling Services Unit, which provides assistance



Rich Duffy, Assistant to the General President for Occupational Health, Safety and Medicine, was meeting with the General President. Minutes later everyone saw smoke billowing from the Pentagon across the Potomac River:

“When the towers fell, we expected we had lost many hundreds of members and many thousands of civilians in New York, and had little idea of the losses at the Pentagon. We stopped watching the television coverage and discussed our initial plan of action. The General President and I went to the Pentagon and remained there with our members through the night. Early the next morning we were credentialed by FEMA to go to New York City and Ground Zero.”

throughout the New York area for FDNY employees and their families. September 11 and other past tragedies demonstrate that the psychological burden in the aftermath of such events is tremendous and that behavioral health services must be available to IAFF members and their families.

In the early days, however, Local 94 and Local 854 needed to focus on their members still on the pile and on the

families of the fallen.

But more important than anything, Locals 94 and 854 needed information. The IAFF staff that sped to Manhattan in the hours after the attacks began working nonstop to address these needs, on the fly as they came up, establishing a war room at the Sheraton that would last for more than two months.

The New York locals needed black bunting to drape across every fire company

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 in New York that lost fire fighters. Rich Duffy, Assistant to the General President for Health, Safety and Medicine, placed a call to a relative who ran a funeral home and explained the situation. The next day, black bunting graced the facades of all companies.

They also needed fire helmets to place on the caskets of all of the 343 fire fighters who lost their lives that day. Calls went out and soon enough, new helmets arrived.

The International also established a charity fund to handle the unprecedented outpouring of support from the public, raising more than \$167 million for the 9-11 Disaster Relief Fund. Countless citizens, sad and frustrated fire fighters among them, struggled to find a way to help. They sent money, so much that in the weeks and months after the attacks an entire hallway at IAFF headquarters was stacked with boxes containing checks from donors. All of it, every dime, was eventually distributed to the families of the fallen.

Turning Point

September 11 was the darkest day in the



Pat Morrison, Assistant to the General President for Education, Training and Human Relations, was working for the Fairfax Fire and Rescue Department and was a member of Fairfax County Local 2068:

“A call came in from the General President’s office the day after the attacks requesting my assistance in New York. The next night two of us headed north in a department vehicle, leaving DC on Interstate 395 and passing the Pentagon building still on fire from the attacks. We spent the next two months working with hundreds of other IAFF members who had gathered in New York to help our fellow fire fighters in need.”

history of the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), but also a day that transformed the fire fighting profession in almost every aspect.

No longer would fire fighters be known just for fighting fires. The tragedy put a spotlight on the profession, and suddenly fire fighters gained more recognition from the public and political leaders for the work they do.

Over the decades, the IAFF has been well-respected in the halls of Congress and considered a political player, but in the aftermath of September 11 the International became the strongest voice for the fire fighting profession —

advocating for improved safety, equipment and training for fire fighters everywhere. As a result, fire fighters and fire service issues were propelled to the forefront of the national agenda. In addition, the IAFF became the “go-to” organization for everyone in the fire service community for resources and expertise.

Because the terrorist attacks put a greater emphasis on fire and emergency response, the IAFF asked Congress to cut the federal bureaucratic tape to better assist grieving families, and was successful at pushing for the increase in benefits provided through the Public Safety Officers Benefits (PSOB) program and expedite the claim process.

The IAFF was also able to secure an additional \$200 million in funding for the Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE Act) grant program to help fire departments work with other law enforcement agencies to devise emergency response plans at the state and local level.

After the attacks, the IAFF called on Congress to develop a new federal program to create an additional 75,000 fire fighter jobs nationwide. In 2003, Congress passed the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Act authorizing \$8 billion to hire 75,000 fire fighters over seven years.

Over the last few years, the SAFER program has proved to be an invaluable

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Michele Shaffer, IAFF Director of Labor Issues and Collective Bargaining, like other IAFF staff members, has a close family connection to fire fighters:



“At the time, I had two young children ages five and three. My husband, who is a fire fighter with Alexandria, VA Local 2141, was initially dispatched to the Pentagon and was gone for several days providing mutual aid in Arlington, Virginia. Whenever the coverage came on television showing the towers collapsing, my five-year-old kept looking for her father. All she knew was that her father was a fire fighter. I’ve always been

proud to say that I was a part of the IAFF, but I couldn’t have been prouder of our leadership after 9/11. The fire fighters really came together as a collective group.”



Chris Dennis, former Executive Secretary for General President Schaitberger, was in a morning meeting with the General President when a staff member rushed in with the news:



“I recall the General President calmly but with great intensity saying, ‘Our world will never again be the same.’ It was as if he instinctively knew that this tragic incident would have a long and lasting impact on the American way of life. I can still feel the cold chill that went down my spine.”



Ron Kuley, IAFF-MDA National Coordinator, was preparing for a one day trip to Manhattan to assist the IAFF WMD/HazMat Training Department and FDNY:

“It was an absolutely beautiful day, and I was packing for New York when I received a phone call from staff saying a plane had struck the World Trade Center. The second plane struck and the Pentagon was struck. Immediately, I gathered my gear and bag and responded to my firehouse in Fairfax County and from there assisted with our department’s Pentagon response. Later, I headed to Manhattan with President Schaitberger, Secretary-Treasurer Bollon and Rich Duffy to assist FDNY Locals 854 and 94. I was

extremely fortunate and privileged to have been a part of the IAFF’s response and witness first-hand the assistance provided to the members and families of FDNY. As tragic of a time this was, I reflect back on it with a great amount of pride on how the IAFF leadership, staff, locals and members responded to take care of our own.”

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tool for fire departments facing layoffs. The IAFF was able to amend the program to allow SAFER funds to be used to bring fire fighters who have been laid off as a result of the recession back to work. To date, more than 5,000 fire fighter jobs have been saved, thanks to these federal funds.

And just last year — after nearly a decade of lobbying and effort — the IAFF and its New York affiliates won a big legislative victory with the passage of the James Zadroga Act. This 9/11 Health and Compensation Act provides funding for medical monitoring and treatment to

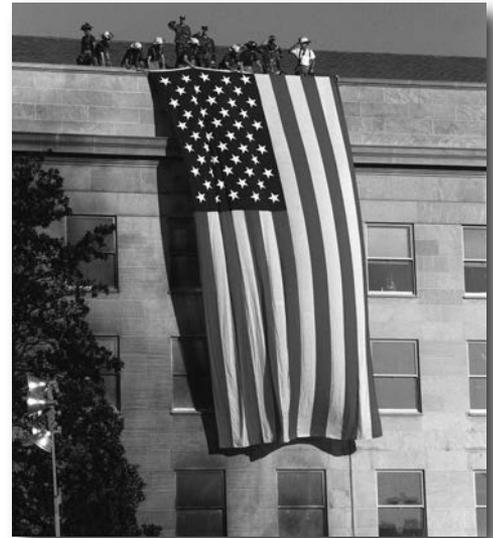
World Trade Center responders and others who become ill as a result of exposure to toxins at Ground Zero.



Barry Kasinitz, Director of Governmental Affairs, was working in his office at headquarters. Like most of us, the horror of the attacks began to sink in after talking to his wife about how they and their children would get home to safety.

“My wife and I both work downtown and we both take the Metro. When we were on the phone my wife said we needed to coordinate our travels because we both shouldn’t be on the Metro at the same time in case something happens and to make sure at least one of us would be okay. I mean it just really hit home. Americans never had to think like this before. I knew

other countries went through this type of thing, but this was just a completely different way of thinking.”



ALWAYS IN OUR
HEARTS AND MINDS

WE WILL NEVER FORGET

S. F. & C. INSURANCE ASSOCIATES, INC. – IAFF FC INSURANCE DIVISION

Cindy Payne, Executive Secretary for Media, Communication & Information Technology, was like so many IAFF staff members already at headquarters doing her job when the planes hit:



“I was afraid but yet numb at the same time. It took me a while to grasp the horror that was unfolding. This was the day I learned the true meaning of what Brotherhood and Sisterhood among fire fighters across the United States and Canada stood for.”

In 1996, the IAFF created the Fire Service Joint Labor/Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI) to improve the health and fitness of fire fighters and paramedics across North America.

The medical component of the WFI was specifically designed to provide a cost-effective investment in the early detection, disease prevention and health promotion for fire fighters.

The full value of the WFI was demonstrated during and after September 11, 2001. The fall of the twin towers and the collapse and destruction of other buildings at the site created a dust cloud of particles coated with combustion by-products. For days, Ground Zero was enveloped in that dust cloud and the fires that continued to burn at the site for months.

Nearly 2,000 FDNY rescue workers responded on the morning of 9/11, as did nearly 10,000 during the next 36 hours. And in the weeks and months following 9/11, virtually all of FDNY first responders worked at the World Trade Center site — amid the debris and dust.

The adoption of the WFI provided a roadmap for early diagnosis and aggressive treatment of all affected fire fighters, which clearly improved medical outcomes. Fully 95 percent of FDNY fire fighters participated in the WFI program providing critical data and insights about the health effects of Ground Zero exposure.

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Katie Shelton, then Secretary for Public Relations, was in her first meeting with her new boss when the second plane hit:

“That’s the moment I think everyone knew the first plane was not an accident. As we were watching the coverage on television, General President

Schaitberger came in and told us to evacuate. All I could think about was getting home to my children, but my car was parked in Arlington. So, several of us shared a cab. On our way, we passed the Pentagon. I can still remember the black smoke and the big hole in the side of the building. I didn’t get home until four-and-a-half hours later.”

Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial

IAFF Members and Families Honor the Fallen

They came from all directions — in a fleet of buses, vans and cabs, and in a motorcade of motorcycles that left from Ground Zero days earlier. Brothers and sisters in the calling clad in dress blues and holding flags, hundreds in kilts marching together with pipe and drums, family members clutching hands and programs all converged on one corner of a vast City park in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with Pikes Peak rising to the West.

Some 2,500 people — friends, family and colleagues in the fire service — joined IAFF General President Harold Schaitberger September 17, 2011, for the 25th IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial honoring the lives of 87 fire fighters who died in the line of duty in the last year.

Hundreds of family members and nearly 900 members of IAFF Honor Guards and Pipe and Drum corps assembled for the annual service held in Memorial Park around the solemn ground where the names of thousands of fallen IAFF members are etched into a black granite wall.

The service began with the rolling thunder of more than 400 riders with the IAFF Motorcycle Group (IAFF-MG) and the Wind & Fire Motorcycle Club joining a procession of more than 50 fire apparatus. President Schaitberger stood in the median line shaking hands and greeting each motorcyclist as they rumbled by. IAFF General Secretary-General Thomas Miller greeted the motorcade that had rumbled from the tip of Manhattan 1,790 miles to Colorado Springs.

In a moving memorial tribute, Schaitberger reflected on the fire fighters who perished 10 years ago in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

“In 2002, we etched every single name of our September 11 fallen on those great walls behind me, one at a time, letter by letter, with love and dignity because in this profession where loss is a part of what we all call the job, it is our duty to honor and reflect on each loss, each life, one at a time,” he said. “And we did that for every fire fighter who perished on 9/11, just as we have come here today to honor and celebrate 87 times the individual lives and stories of our brothers and sisters we lost over this past year.”

The elaborate though somber ceremony began as President Schaitberger and IAFF General Secretary-Treasurer Miller laid a wreath at the Wall of Honor, where earlier hundreds of family members had etched the names of their loved ones on paper. Colorado Springs Local 5 President Jeremy Kroto welcomed those in attendance and said he shared in the grief they felt because one of Local 5’s own — Pamela J. Butler — was also being added to the Wall of Honor.

“With the loss of our Local 5 sister, we are once again reminded of the emotional toll that comes with placing a member of your own Local on the Wall,” Kroto said.

Legendary General Secretary-Treasurer Vinnie Bollon, who died March 28, was added to the Wall of Honor. In a touching moment his widow, Linda, was presented with the IAFF flag before President Schaitberger presented her with the IAFF Medal of Honor.

IAFF Colorado Springs Local 5 has assisted with the Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial since 1988. Prior to 2001, the memorial was a smaller affair. After 9/11, the decision was made to erect the Wall of Honor as a lasting and profound memorial for IAFF’s fallen members.

“Our goal, from the moment families of the fallen step off the plane in Colorado Springs, is to have a fire fighter at their side to transport them wherever they want to go and help them with anything associated with their visit,” Kroto said.



Greg Hewitt, Research Assistant in the Canadian Office, was out of the office visiting family on that morning, but he worked frantically to contact the office:

“When I was able to talk with then-Assistant to the General President of Canadian Operations Sean McManus, our mission was clear. We needed to distribute accurate information to the Canadian membership. Specifically, we told them that the IAFF had directed the membership not to self-deploy to Ground Zero. Then, we told them there were ways to help and how they could do that.”

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Getting Better

September 11 also changed the awareness level of the men and women in the fire service as the hunger for training increased.

While the IAFF provided hazardous materials and weapons of mass destruction training long before the al Qaeda terrorist network flew planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the attacks — and the 9/11 report that followed — brought a fresh sense of urgency to the need for fire fighters to be trained to respond to worst-case scenarios. Ten years after September 11, the IAFF plays a huge role in providing a blanket of safety for the nation as its HazMat/WMD training curriculum has expanded dramatically. The IAFF provides training for IAFF members and all first responders through grants from several federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Energy.



Teresa Valenzuela, now Executive Assistant to the General President, was at her desk on the morning of September 11.

“It was my first year at the IAFF. I remember Assistant to the General President Rich Duffy walking in our office and saying, ‘A plane just hit one of the twin towers.’ The General President turned on his television, and as everyone was talking about the incident, we saw the other plane hit the second tower. I think we were all still shocked and unsure of what was really happening, until they reported the Pentagon getting hit. President Schaitberger said, ‘We need to evacuate staff now.’ At that

point, I knew we were being attacked. I will never forget that day. It was emotionally draining trying to get home and watching the footage on television as the towers collapsed. Feeling the fear we felt that day and many months after was something I never thought we would experience in this country.”

9/11 Remembrance

In recognition of the tenth anniversary of September 11 and the 343 FDNY members who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, the IAFF created a special 10-Year Remembrance photo album and medallion “Collector’s Set.”



This Collector's Set is available to IAFF members for \$35; proceeds from the purchase benefit the IAFF Charitable Foundation and help provide financial assistance and support to IAFF members and their families when they need it most. ■



Ron McGraw, Health & Safety Assistant and Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Reserves, was at his desk when the first plane hit:

“We received a call from the FDNY telling us to turn on the television because a plane had hit the World Trade Center. As we watched, we figured the FDNY was about to have a very long day, but we had no idea what to make of it. We watched live as the second plane hit, confirming that this was no accident. We were under attack. Shortly thereafter, Assistant to the General President Rich Duffy told us to evacuate because a plane had just hit the Pentagon. Just like December 7, 1941, September 11, 2001 became the galvanizing event that fully engaged the country into war. This time it’s the Global War on Terror, for which I’ve proudly served two tours.”

Defending Fire Fighters

IAFF members continue to risk their lives day-in and day-out in a profession that should never be taken for granted but often is, especially as the political attacks on public employees continue to escalate. To help IAFF affiliates bridge the gap between fire fighters and decision-makers, the IAFF developed a Fire Ops 101 program that gives elected officials and the media an opportunity to become fire fighters for a day, and is a great way to change minds and votes.

Unfortunately, as the economy has spiraled down, and as more new leaders are elected to Congress, there is less support for fire fighter issues and causes.

Just a decade after the nation’s fire fighters were held aloft as heroes for the sacrifice they made on September 11, 2001, anti-labor groups have strived mightily to push public sentiment against all public employees. To many, it feels like a stunning and dispiriting reversal of public favor. Still, citizens are truly appreciative of fire fighters’ contributions to a civil and safe society, and it is critically important to remind the public what fire fighters do, not just when terror strikes, but every day and night.

The IAFF’s top priority remains to ensure safer and healthier working conditions and to advocate through the political process for benefits and protections for IAFF members and their families. And professional fire fighters and paramedics will continue to save lives and property, no matter what. ■