NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2001

ONE WEEK LATER

Workers still hoping

Volunteers keep digging in spite of daunting odds

By BRIAN KATES
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Ground Zero, Day 7: Fatigue and frustration.

"We are doing everything we can do to try to find human beings," Mayor Giuliani said after visiting the devastation at The Pit yesterday. "But as time goes by, the hope of being able to do that diminishes."

Still, he insisted, he is not ready to give up. Nor, he said, are the 2,000 cops, firefighters and hardhats who have clawed through the wreckage day and night, hoping against hope to save survivors. "If I were to try to order them to stop, they would not do it," Giuliani said.

"There have been situations in which people have survived longer than this," the mayor said. "We will continue until we are beyond the point where it would be possible" for life to be sustained.

"Any success would be a terrific success," Giuliani said. But, he added: "The simple reality is that we will not be able to rescue a significant number of people."

Workers have removed 39,416 tons of rubble from the scene, city officials said. But, Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen noted, "Some of the largest structures are still there." No survivors have been pulled out since Wednesday.

In his morning briefing, the mayor said that rescuers were finding not bodies, but body parts. One grim discovery: the remains of a police officer — identified by the radio still hanging from his belt.

Many rescue workers have been laboring at the scene since chaos broke loose last Tuesday, and orders were issued that anyone who had not yet had a day off must take one today.

Exhausted and covered in gray dust, Fire Lt. Rick Burmeister leaned against the bumper of his rig. "We're digging through 100 stories to get the people who were up there," he said. "When the planes hit, it was like a pancake effect. Eventually we will hit bodies. If we could find just one — just one person — alive, it would be miracle."

A new landscape

Burmeister had been running 3½-inch hoses for three blocks to pour water deep into the pit because hydrants at the scene have gone dry. Among his worries: Any people who might have survived could be drowned in the efforts to keep the fires from spreading.

As volunteers in hardhats removed rubble in a bucket brigade, iron workers battled heat and smoke to take measurements of the thickness and density of exposed beams.

Using mathematical equations, they converted their findings into a code that they spray-painted onto the exposed metal — showing crane operators the magnitude of each lift. Three huge cranes were pulling mangled beams from the devastation. One crane was so enormous that it had to be brought in on a flatbed truck and assembled at the scene.

"Every day it is a new landscape," said Port Authority Police Officer Bill Connors, his voice hoarse from inhaling dust. "A lot of the rubble is gone and now the iron is exposed. But once that iron is taken away, there will be more rubble under it. It's like a layer cake."

Adding to the dangers, every time rubble is moved, it can open a channel for oxygen to feed the fires that smolder deep inside the hole.

Zone of devastation

Von Essen said that explosions and fires also are fed by fuel in the gas tanks of vehicles that were parked in the basement of the twin towers and by vast amounts of paper amid the wreckage.

Sam Lubi, 36, a heavy equipment operator from upstate, had been at the scene since Wednesday, working in 15-hour shifts and sleeping in his car. Asked what he thought were the chances of finding survivors, he replied: "On a scale of 1 to 100 — 3."

Still, he said, he planned to continue to work at the site "until they decide to declare it a recovery mission."

Lubi said his church and a local physical therapist were "paying my mortgage" back home while he was in New York.

Throughout the zone of devastation, firefighters hosed down buildings to control the choking dust that continued to settle everywhere. At Church and Greenwich Sts., police established a checkpoint where people milled in long lines waiting for cops or National Guardsmen to escort them to their apartments to retrieve minimal belongings. To prevent looting, tenants were required to produce two forms of ID to prove their residency.

With a guitar strung across his shoulder, Cooper Union chemical engineering student Brian Deutsch, 19, emerged from his Greenwich St. apartment. He lugged a full book bag and two bags of clothing.

He was heading for his parents' home in New City, Rockland County. "As soon as I can come back," he said, "I will. This is my home, and I'm not going to be beaten."



INTO THE ABYSS Scene at Ground Zero, where rescuers have been working

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to see survivors



since last Tuesday, after two jetliners hit the World Trade Center. No survivors have been found since Wednesday.

Popular bar offers a respite

By JOSE MARTINEZ
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

The television stays off at the Reade Street Pub.

The men at the bar, the ones carrying masks, hardhats and long faces, have already seen enough.

"We need to get away," said one rescue worker. "This place gives us something almost normal."

Just a few blocks north of the smoldering pile of rubble that was once the World Trade Center, neon beer signs still glow in the windows of the neighborhood watering hole.

The doors are open, ready to welcome crews of workers stepping off duty and into a slice of the old routine.

"Bud, Guinness, Coors Light," bartender Benny Clyne said. "Whatever they want, it's theirs."

The pub reopened Saturday afternoon, and isn't shutting down until its regular 4 a.m. closing time. Firefighters from as far away as Minnesota, Chicago and Boston have stopped by for a somber nightcap.

"Some of the firemen come in, and they're very sad," Clyne said. "But they're very happy to help."

Late Sunday night, Bob Marley tunes played softly on the jukebox, workers fresh off the disaster site quietly sipped beer and Clyne worked the bar as if it were any weekend night. He waited for the 1 a.m. rush that accompanies a crew shift.

"We're helping them get back to normal," he said. "That's why [pub owners Bruce and Brian Barasky] wanted to reopen."

A few blocks up Greenwich St., Ivy's Bistro is also bustling. Neighborhood regulars sipping white wine at the small bar have been joined by cops and tattooed men in work boots.

Jackie Thanasoulis, who runs Ivy's with her husband, Steve, kept the restaurant open Tuesday, as frantic workers fleeing the attacks on the Trade Center offered her $20 to use her phone.

She refused to take their money. And now the buffet spread, with trays of baked ziti and steamed vegetables, isn't costing anyone a penny.

Richard Post, a cop from Hempstead, L.I., sat at a table with a group of off-duty officers. A waitress delivered a tray with glasses of water and bottles of beer.

"When you're working 10 to 12 hours down there and you come up a few blocks, it feels like you're back in the world," Post said. "But we're all still thinking about our brothers down there."

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