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One Section of Downtown Is Reopened, but Its Few Visitors Are Distracted by Their Memories

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

Signs of life came back to the towers and pavement of Manhattan's financial district yesterday, as some workers returned, four days after the terrorist destruction of the World Trade Center, to prepare for the planned reopening of the financial markets tomorrow.

The area south of Canal Street and east of Broadway was opened to the public for the first time since Tuesday. Subway trains stopped at a handful of stations, two bus lines resumed service, and ferries docked at the Battery.

But only a trickle of people went there, not the usual torrent. And rather than stock and bond traders, they were mostly janitors, electricians, telephone technicians and others needed to get the offices humming again.

Many workers were hesitant to return to a place they had so recently fled in terror. "It was scary to come back," said a young man taking a cigarette break outside 1 New York Plaza, where he works in the Goldman, Sachs cafeteria. "I'm not too crazy about being up on the 43rd floor now."

Subway trains and buses stop, but only a trickle of passengers get off.

Around the city, in ways large and small, New Yorkers devoted much of the weekend to mourning and remembrance of the more than 5,000 people missing or confirmed dead in the attack. Deputy Mayor Joseph J. Lhota urged people to spend time with their families. "Hug them a little longer," he said. "Hold them a little closer."

Funerals were held yesterday for three of the Fire Department's most revered figures, and a memorial service for all the victims will be held today at 5:30 p.m. at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Religious leaders, along with the former mayors David N. Dinkins and Edward I. Koch, made plans for a Sept. 23 memorial service in Central Park.

At the Park East Synagogue on 67th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues, Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations, attended a prayer service for victims of the attack. He joined two dozen firefighters there, many of them from a fire station next door whose comrade, Robert Curatolo, is among the missing. "We have all become one family to protect the city," Mr. Annan told them.

On Friday night, the Navy hospital ship Comfort arrived at Pier 92 to provide housing and other services for rescue workers.

By yesterday evening, 84 of the dead had been identified, and 4,972 people were reported missing.

At the Armory at Lexington Avenue and 26th Street, the State Crime Victims Board began the process of helping relatives of the dead pay for funerals. People streamed into the armory, carrying pictures, documents and DNA evidence to help in identifying bodies.

Police Commissioner Bernard B. Kerik said the rash of bomb threats earlier in the week had abated. A Queens man, Junior A. Brydson, was released yesterday after charges of calling in a bomb threat were dropped.

Mr. Kerik said the number of looting incidents remained very small, with just two arrests made Friday night and yesterday morning.

There was a sharp increase in activity at the region's airports yesterday, but the pace remained well below the norm, with many flights canceled and heightened security slowing things down. Some visitors trying to get home had camped in the terminals for days. European travelers grumbled that even the stepped-up precautions were inadequate.

"I am scared even though I know that security has been heightened," said James Brown, a 19-year-old college student from Leeds, England, as he waited at Kennedy International Airport for an American Airlines flight. "But I want to go home."

In Lower Manhattan, the A trains bypassed Chambers Street and made stops at Broadway-Nassau; the 4 and 5 trains stopped at Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall, Fulton Street and Bowling Green, but bypassed Wall Street; and the J and Z trains stopped at Broad Street but bypassed Fulton Street. Transit officials said they hoped to get the 2 and 3 trains, whose tunnel was flooded, running downtown by tomorrow. At street level, the M15 and M103 bus lines resumed operation into the financial district. Cars remained banned.

Chelsea Piers offered another sign of the gradual return to normal, phasing out its role as a staging area for volunteers. "We're bringing back New York families to play basketball. To not be afraid," said David A. Tewksbury, executive vice president of Chelsea Piers Management. "On Wednesday we became a volunteer site where we probably had 10,000 volunteers coming in and out. We set up a full-scale surgical unit with 120 and 150 beds and a mobile field hospital. We have basically for the last four days been working around the clock."

Seeking to quell fears that the dust and ash might be contaminated with asbestos, Christie Whitman, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, said constant monitoring had shown asbestos at normal, low levels in the air at the site.

A small number of business people ventured back to offices in the financial district, walking past camouflage-clad National Guard troops posted at intersections. "No power, no water, no anything," Raymond Gomez, president of RGA Architects and Planners, said of his firm's home at 29 Broadway. "I've got 30 people who need to work."

The area, while far from crowded was noisy, with helicopters overhead, street sweepers scrubbing the blacktop and everywhere, workers hosing down windows and plazas.

Technicians from Nextira Communications worked on a telecommunications system for Nasdaq at an office on Whitehall Street that Nasdaq left in the spring to move into 1 Liberty Plaza, which was damaged last week. "We're hoping to get hundreds of lines in," said one of the technicians, James Mahon.

Sandeep Chandrashakran returned to his deli on Centre Street and found a broken window, a thick layer of soot, rotting food and roaches. He decided against trying to clean it up, and left quickly.

"I just don't know why I came here this morning," he said. "I can't worry about my business when there are all those dead people somewhere in there."

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