

TWU LOCAL 100 RECOGNIZES YOUR HEROISM



20 YEARS LATER



Every American knows about the brave firefighters and police officers who rushed into the towers when the planes hit the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. But hardly any Americans – even New Yorkers -- know about the prominent role taken on by the MTA's transit workforce on that fateful day and on the days after.

As one of transit's emergency responders to the World Trade Center disaster, TWU Local 100 President John Samuelsen vowed early on in his administration that he would change that perception. Armed with an official list from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which documented the names and pass numbers of over 2,000 transit workers who were assigned to Ground Zero, he created the 9/11 Recognition task force chaired by union officers Mario Galvet and Kevin McCawley, both of whom also responded to the site.

Brother Galvet designed a recognition pin, and a larger medallion, to be presented to those TWU members who responded to the site, whether assigned by transit or as a volunteer. All responders are eligible to receive the recognition pin. Both the pin and the medallion were forged by Medallie Arts/NWT Mint, which also produces the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Pulitzer Prize medals, among others. They recognized the significance of these awards. Only those who have developed verified illnesses under the Victims Compensation Fund (VCF) stemming from their exposure to toxic dust at the site may receive the medallion.

In a powerful ceremony in the fall of 2015 which marked the 14th anniversary of the attack on the Twin Towers, some 300 union members received their pins and medals. We will do this again tonight, Tuesday, August 31, 2021, as we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the attack on America.

For several years, Local 100 Communications has been interviewing union members who served at Ground Zero, videotaping their recollections and also asking them to bring in to the hall photos they took while at the disaster site. This publication is the result of that effort. These are photos of transit workers operating at Ground Zero, by transit workers and transit staff, which show the work performed.

As the towers fell, TWU Train Operators and Bus Operators evacuated citizens from lower Manhattan. Then, once the scope of the disaster became evident, Transit assigned over two thousand workers to the operation. For the first three days, the only heavy rigs at the site were New York City Transit's. Our Track Workers and Structure Maintainers removed damaged and destroyed debris and vehicles using our heavy equipment, so that rescue crews could access the site. Other MOW personnel went in to repair crucial radio and communications links which were severed when the towers went down. NYCT Telephone Maintainers extended the Transit Authority's underground phone lines to create phone banks for first responders at Ground Zero since cellphone communications had become disabled after the towers fell. Lighting Maintainers set up dozens of generators and lighting towers that turned night into day for the first wave of rescue personnel.

Our Bus Operators, some of whom evacuated citizens as the towers fell, later brought first responders to the site using our fleet of buses. Trades titles assisted in the rescue and recovery effort by cutting iron and lifting wreckage. Station Cleaners then performed the massive clean-up required to begin to rebuild the damaged subway stations and tracks at the site.

All TWU Local 100 members who took part in the 9/11 rescue and recovery effort, and their families, many of whom suffered with them, are deserving of recognition and a place in history in the accounting of the events of September 11, 2001 and the days immediately following.

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Transit Workers of various titles dig through debris on the morning of 9/12 to uncover victims with the shattered globe sculpture which once graced the World Trade Center Plaza.



This still taken from the video documentary, “Above and Below,” shows transit workers digging in the rubble of the World Trade Center within a few hours of the collapse of the towers.



Transit workers aiding in the removal of flag-draped human remains, in the middle of what was the World Trade Center Plaza. Others are digging in the far background.



Transit workers preparing to begin clean-up effort, removing cars, on Vesey Street on the morning of 9/12.





Exhausted Transit workers rest as night falls. Many worked double shifts. Many others came back on their own time.



TA's huge Terex crane was positioned in the WTC plaza by transit on September 11th. When night fell, our powerful floodlights illuminated the entire area so rescue crews would work. The crane was brought in by barge from Brooklyn.



Structure Maintainers operate transit front-loaders clearing vehicles and debris from Vesey Street on the morning of 9/12. They had been working feverishly through the night of the 11th to clear the way for FDNY and NYPD.



Transit Workers direct the removal of a damaged EMS ambulance under the wreckage of the Millennium Hilton on 9/12



Film icon and Oscar Winner actress Elizabeth Taylor came to Ground Zero to encourage and support rank and file transit workers.



Transit front-loaders clearing debris on Church Street.



Many thousands of gallons of fuel were trucked in by Transit to run generators which provided lighting as well as fueling the many pieces of heavy equipment operating at the scene.



Then-LES Division Vice Chair Kevin McCawley with other responders near the remnants of the North Tower.



Gritty work at night falls as Transit workers move debris. There were many reports of trapped victims, most of which turned out to be false.



Front loader finishing up the clean-up on Vesey and Church about to move a damaged NYPD RMP.



The massive job of clearing debris was done by transit. Below, a Structure Maintainer clears the mountain of debris that was WTC 7 on West Broadway and Vesey Street.

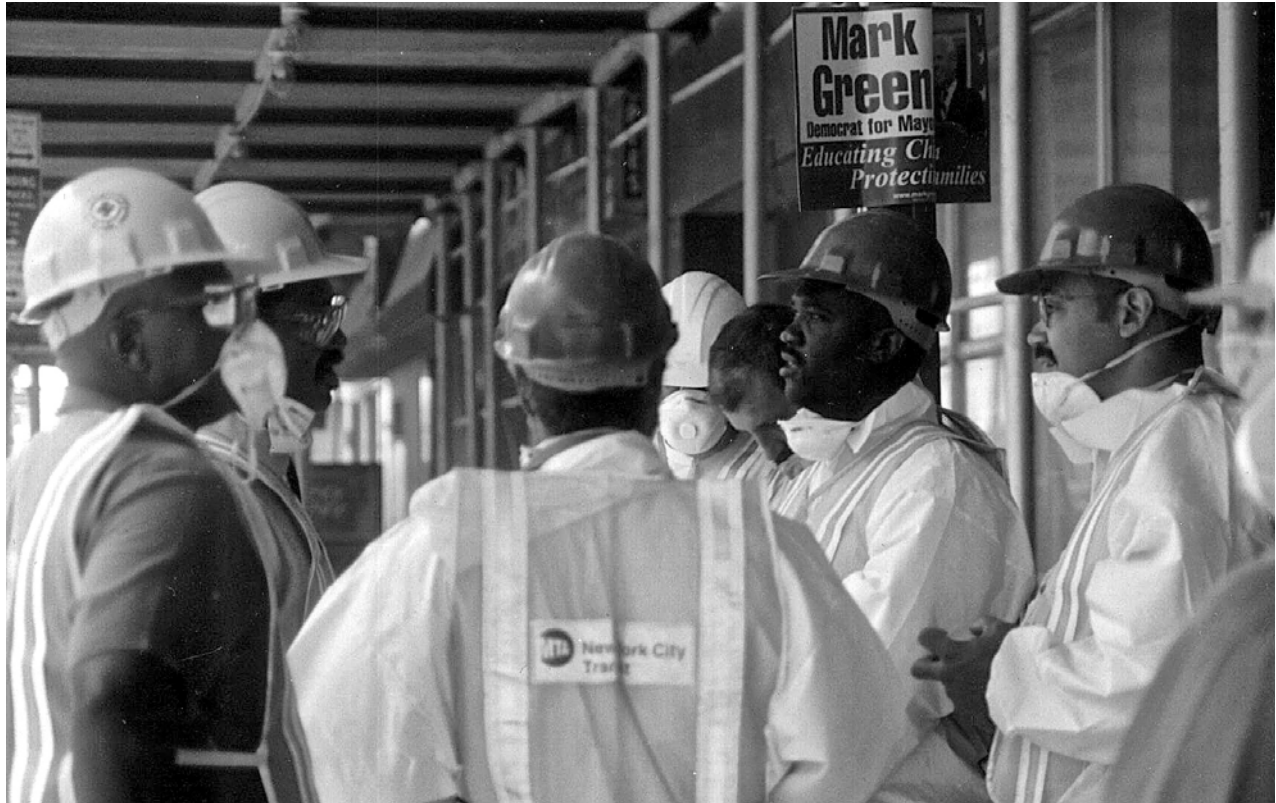




Transit workers engaged in clean-up operations as viewed from the interior of the burnt-out skeleton of the WTC 6 building.



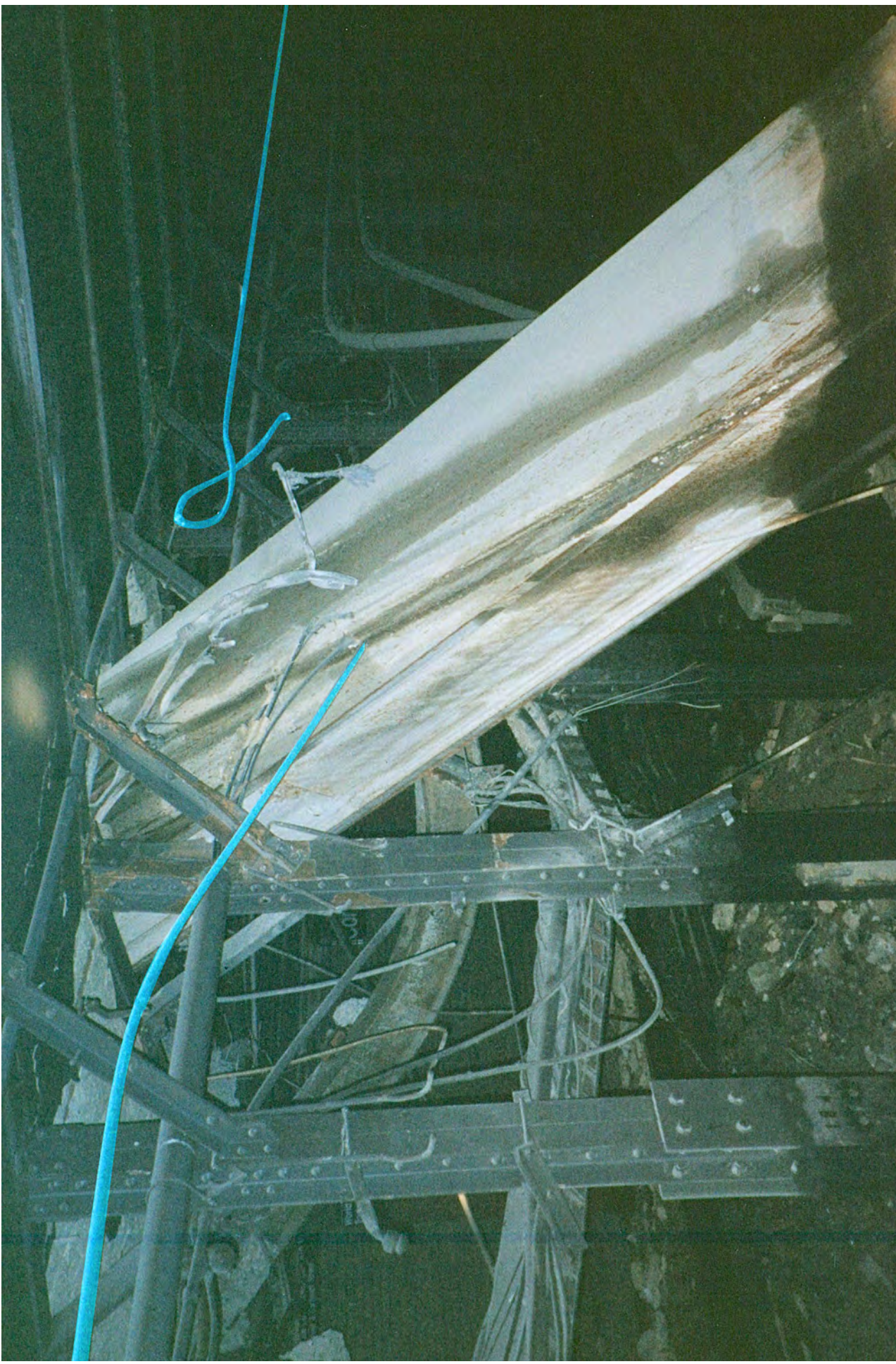
Lighting Maintainers taking a break from the clean-up duties immediately adjacent to the cemetery in the St. Paul's churchyard on Church Street on 9/12.



Cleaners congregate at Church and Murray on 9/12 to receive their instructions. Sign on pole shows that the attack took place on the day of the Democratic Primary Election in which Public Advocate Mark Green opposed Bronx BP Fernando Ferrer for Mayor.



TWU member dressed in full Tyvek suit to protect him from toxins was one of hundreds who were assigned to clean debris from the train stations below the disaster site.



Highlighted in blue, the antenna cable responsible for carrying police and train radio communications for the World Trade Center area was severed by a box beam that traveled from the 83rd floor of the South Tower. The beam scored a direct hit through 30 feet of pavement and infrastructure into the Cortlandt Street IRT station.



Electronic Equipment Maintainer Mario Galvet inspected the damage done to communications cables at the site. The cable at left (highlighted in blue), which was severed by the collapsing towers, originally extended through the WTC concourse. Mr. Galvet and other TA communications personnel, in cooperation with cellphone carriers, used this antenna during the rescue and recovery effort to attempt to activate the cellphones of victims lying underneath the rubble of the towers.



Transit Cleaners had a huge job: Hundreds were assigned to the effort.



Damage to subway tunnel: Union members inspecting debris wall on the north-bound tracks just north of Rector Street on the #1 line, taken on the evening of 9/11.



Then-acting VP of Maintenance of Way John Samuelson (center) assisted with setup of welding gas cylinders for rescue and recovery operations.



The bucket brigade consisting of Track Workers, and other responders on the pile in the middle of what used to be World Trade Center Plaza on 9/12.



Transit Workers setting up welding equipment on 9/11.



The transit command post at Ground Zero occupied three city blocks along Church Street opposite the WTC site and housed reporting locations and offices as well as break rooms.



Transit workers utilizing heavy duty forklifts to remove debris at Vesey and Church streets, They worked through the night on the 11th into the 12th.



Transit workers operated numerous mega-forklifts which were used to remove dozens of vehicles and other heavy objects that impeded rescue efforts.



NYCT Communications patched in TA telephone lines underground, and made large phone banks for rescuers to use since all phone service to the area was down.



Transit loaders removed vast quantities of debris from the site.



Searching for victims on the morning of 9/12, transit workers side by side with emergency responders.

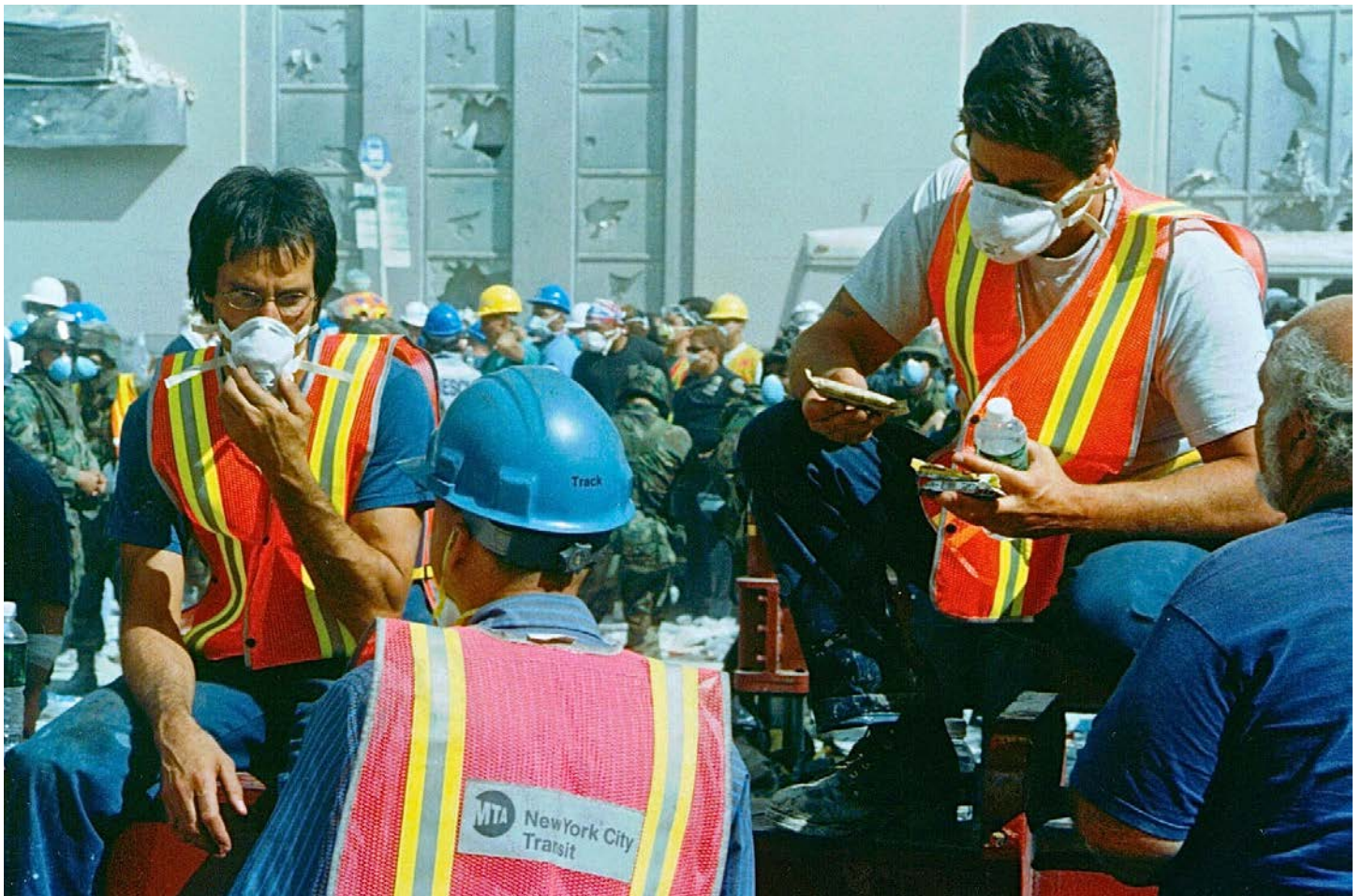




Crowd of rescuers. In the center, the biggest piece of equipment at Ground Zero was Transit's 100-ton Terex crane, normally used for lifting subway cars off of elevated structures.



The clutch of emergency personnel shows the prominent role of transit workers at the disaster scene. Photo by Jeff Makely, Baltimore Sun.







In this photo taken by former Director Pete Foley, a large contingent of transit workers tackles the Pile.



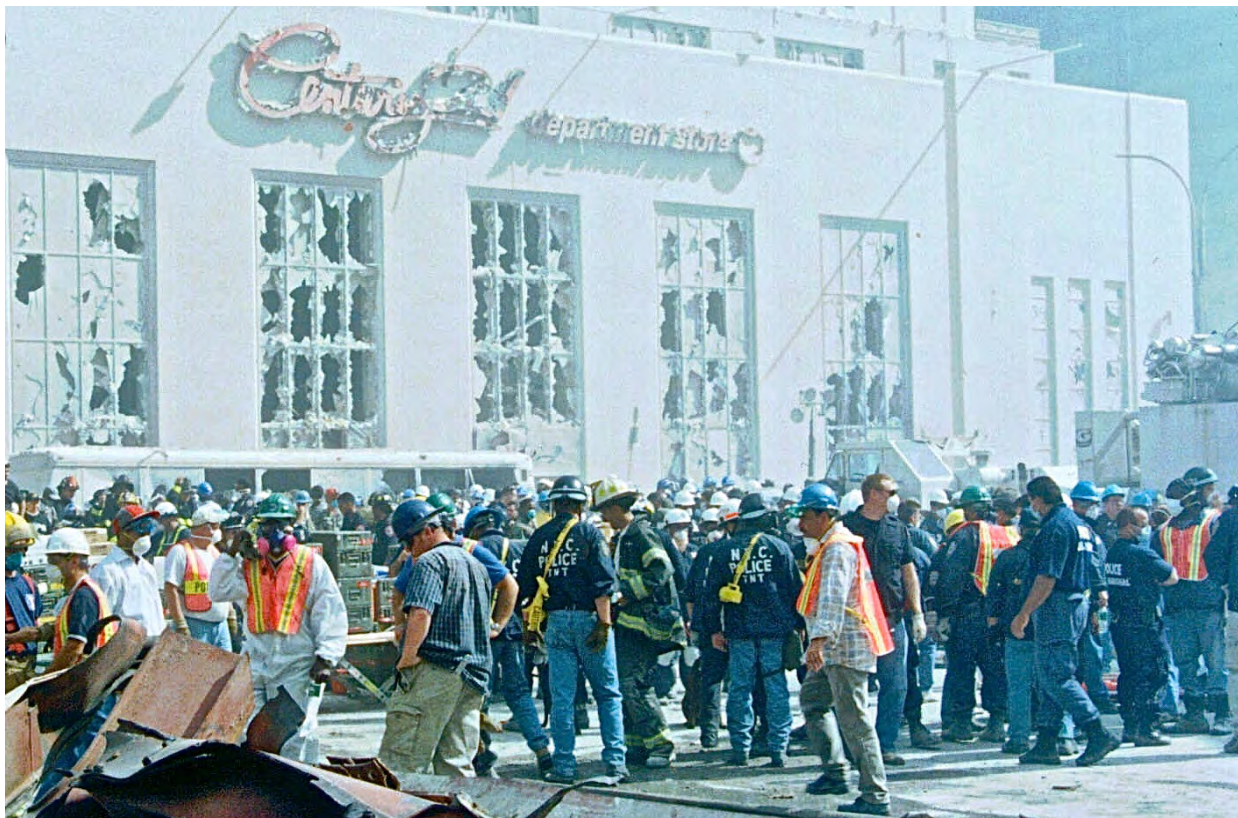


Photo by Baltimore Sun photographer Jeff Makely silhouettes transit workers against the smoldering scene in the middle of Ground Zero on 9/11.





TWU's Pete Foley was in the thick of the rescue and recovery effort. He succumbed to the effects of his exposure to toxins at Ground Zero.



Rescuers including Transit, NYPD, and FDNY outside the shattered windows of the Century 21 Department Store on Church Street.



Transit Authority flatbed carries away damaged FDNY EMS ambulance on Church Street on 9/12.



Lighting Maintainers show their patriotism while walking along the northern perimeter of Ground Zero.



Union safety officers arriving at Ground Zero on 9/12 to inspect working conditions above and below ground.



Union officers Kevin McCawley and Pete Foley at the memorial to victims at the site.

Photo Credits:

Cover: Alan Saly

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p5:Alan Saly

p6: TWU member -- identity unknown

p7: TWU member -- identity unknown

p8: TWU member -- identity unknown

p9: Alan Saly

p10: Barry Arcuik

p11: TWU member -- identity unknown

p12: Pete Foley, TWU member -- identity unknown

p13: TWU member -- identity unknown

p14: TWU member -- identity unknown

p15: Unidentified military -- Guard and Reserve

p16: Alan Saly

p17: Alan Saly

p18: Dan McEnananey

p19: Victor Yermakov

p20: Guillaîne James, Kevin McCawley

p21: TWU member -- identity unknown; Alan Saly

p22: Stephen Gottfried, Tim Hammel

p23: Bedford -- Structure Maintainer

p24: Ilya Glazman, Mario Galvet

p25: TWU member -- identity unknown, Pete Foley

p26: TWU member -- identity unknown

p27: Jeff Makely, Baltimore Sun

p28: Alan Saly

p29: Alan Saly, TWU member -- identity unknown

p30: Pete Foley

p31: Vernon Thorpe

p32: Jeff Makely, Baltimore Sun

p33: TWU member -- identity unknown

p34: Kevin McCawley, Alan Saly

p35: Alan Saly

p36: Ray Miranda

p37: Alan Saly, TWU member -- identity unknown