

FIRE RESCUE 1

9/11:

THEN. NOW. ALWAYS.

**REFLECTIONS ON
NEVER FORGET
AFTER 25 YEARS**

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FROM THE EDITOR

As the distance from Sept. 11, 2001, grows, so does the responsibility to preserve its stories. Many firefighters entering the service today know the images, the numbers and the history, but they did not experience the uncertainty, grief and resolve that defined that day and its aftermath.

For those who were there, sharing their experiences helps a new generation understand the scale of the response and recognize those whose actions may otherwise fade from view.

That instinct runs through the story of retired FDNY Assistant Commissioner for Communications Steve Gregory, who survived the collapse of both towers yet directs attention to the dispatchers who fielded a stream of often-heartbreaking calls from people desperate for help. Similarly, retired Shanksville Fire Chief Terry Shaffer continues to focus the Flight 93 story on the passengers and crew whose actions likely prevented an even greater loss of life.

That same commitment to remembrance extends to those still living with the consequences of 9/11. Rear Admiral Lisa Delaney explains how the World Trade Center Health Program helps ensure responders and survivors facing related illnesses are not forgotten and continue to receive the care they need.

Together, these accounts show what it means to carry “Never Forget” forward. As Fire Chief Jason Caughey reminds us in his reflections, the phrase requires us to listen, document, teach and continue supporting those whose lives were forever changed. It means preserving the full story.

I hope these stories inspire reflection, remembrance and a renewed commitment to Never Forget.

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Read more from our 9/11 25-year remembrance coverage at firerescue1.com/9-11.

WE REMEMBER THOSE WHO ANSWERED THE CALL

Their legacy is still felt today.





THE ENDURING MEANING OF **NEVER FORGET**

The greatest tribute to those lost on 9/11 isn't found only in ceremonies but rather in the values firefighters carry into every shift

By Fire Chief Jason Caughey

AP/Graham Morrison

For some, the events of September 11, 2001, feel like they happened yesterday. For others, the day is known only through stories, photographs, documentaries and the lessons passed down by those who lived it.

Twenty-five years ago, I was a volunteer firefighter. I can still remember sitting in disbelief as the news broadcast live coverage of the attacks. Watching emergency responders run toward unimaginable danger while thousands of citizens fled for safety forever changed my understanding of what it truly means to serve. That moment defined the difference between those who run away from danger and those who willingly run toward it.

The days, weeks and months that followed shaped how I viewed our country for the next quarter century. You couldn't drive down the street without seeing American flags flying from homes, businesses and vehicles. Communities came together in ways not seen since the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Americans stood united against terrorism with an unwavering sense of purpose and patriotism.

For the fire service, everything changed on September 11. The loss of 343 firefighters was more than a statistic; it was a reminder of the extraordinary sacrifice our profession demands and the price that service sometimes requires.

Never Forget quickly became both the fire service's rallying cry and the nation's commitment to preserving the memory of that day. Twenty-five years later, however, those words deserve more than repetition. They deserve reflection.

What do those words mean to the fire service today? What do they mean to you? And how should departments that were not directly impacted honor this historic anniversary? For me, the greatest way to honor September 11 is to honor the people.

Honor the courage of those who entered collapsing buildings without hesitation.



Honor the humility of those who worked tirelessly at Ground Zero in the days and weeks that followed.

Honor the determination of those who searched endlessly for survivors and, later, for those who would never come home.

Honor the resilience of the survivors. The physical, emotional and mental toll challenged even the strongest among them. Yet each day they got up, brushed themselves off and continued serving others. They cared for their fellow firefighters, supported their communities and lived with servant hearts. Their legacy is not only found in their sacrifice but also in their unwavering commitment to service after the tragedy.

As fire departments across the nation prepare to mark this 25-year remembrance, I encourage us to do more than hold a memorial ceremony or participate in a stair climb. Those traditions are meaningful and should continue, but they should also inspire action.



Flags and flowers are placed in the inscribed names at the National September 11 Memorial in New York. AP/Donald King

Recommit to a servant mindset.

Strengthen relationships with your mutual-aid partners.

Break down jurisdictional barriers.

Train together.

Serve together.

Lead together.

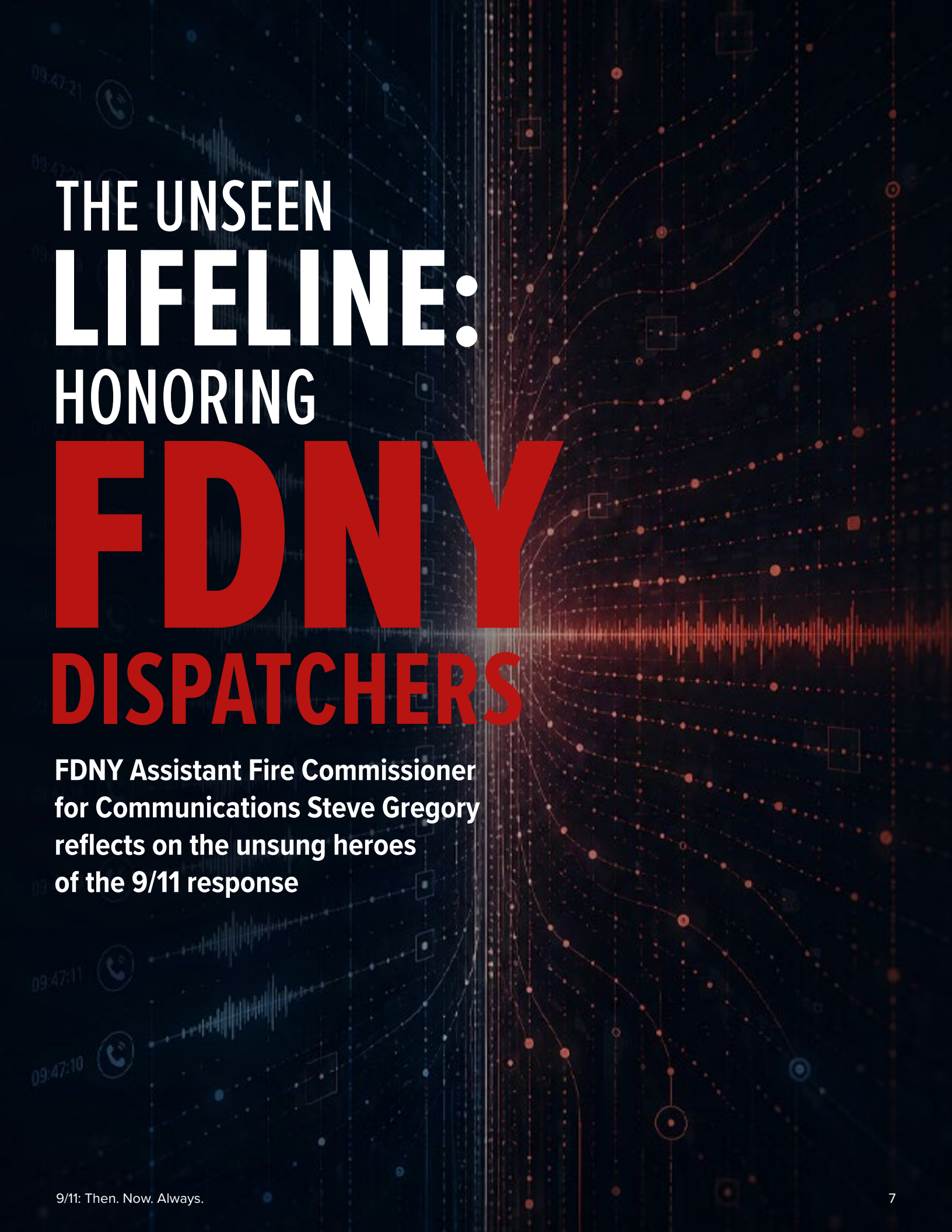
On 9/11, there were no department patches, no ranks, no titles and no divisions. There was a single fire service with one mission: Save lives. Twenty-five years later, that lesson remains just as relevant.

The greatest tribute we can offer those who served and those who were lost is to become better firefighters, stronger organizations and more unified communities. Let us honor their sacrifice, not only by remembering what happened that day but by living the values they demonstrated every day after it.

Because while history remembers September 11 for the tragedy it brought to our nation, the fire service should remember it for something even greater — the extraordinary example of courage, unity, sacrifice and selfless service. **1**

About the Author

Jason Caughey serves as fire chief of the Laramie County Fire Authority (LCFA) in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and as a senior advisor to FireRescue1.



THE UNSEEN LIFELINE: HONORING FDNY DISPATCHERS

FDNY Assistant Fire Commissioner
for Communications Steve Gregory
reflects on the unsung heroes
of the 9/11 response

On Sept. 11, 2001, FDNY dispatchers became the lifeline connecting desperate civilians trapped in the World Trade Center, fire companies ascending the towers and commanders struggling to build a picture of an incident unlike anything the department had ever faced.

As calls flooded the communications center, dispatchers managed an impossible balance: gathering critical information, directing resources across New York City and offering reassurance to people they often knew they could not save.

FDNY Assistant Fire Commissioner for Communications (ret.) Steve Gregory — who survived the Towers' collapse — oversaw the massive logistical response that continued in the hours, days and months after the attacks.

As he reflects on 9/11 25 years later, Gregory credits the dispatchers working in communications centers across the five boroughs with helping hold the department together during one of the most chaotic days in its history. Their work unfolded far from the public eye but deserves lasting recognition.

FireRescue1: Describe the radio traffic before the Towers fell.

There was a tremendous amount of radio activity. We were getting calls from people throughout the building: "I'm on the 89th floor. I've got 50 people." "I'm here. I've got 10 people." The calls

were coming from everywhere. The dispatcher would relay the information to the command post, which would then relay it to the units working their way up the stairs because the elevators weren't operating. They would tell the crews, "We've got a report of this or that." The radio traffic was very active from the beginning.

I don't think anybody could have done a better job than we did that day, taking into consideration everything people went through and all the unknowns involved.

What was your main direction to dispatchers during that time?

It was basically: Do what you can, then move to the next call. I had sent one of my chiefs to the Manhattan Communications office, and he was communicating with me, saying, "We're getting overloaded here." I told him to have them handle it the best they could, but they couldn't stay on the phone with callers. As hard as that was, there were other calls coming in. The next person wanted to talk to somebody too, and there might be 50 people waiting behind them.

“

Caller: I'm in Building 1, on the 82nd floor. We can't get out.

Dispatch: Just sit tight. They're on their way.



FDNY DISPATCH TRANSCRIPTS

Was that the hardest aspect of the dispatchers' response — not being able to stay on the line with people?

Yeah. You had somebody asking you for help, and in most cases, we're able to give people help. But here were people saying, "Can you call my husband? Can you tell him ... ?" You could say, "OK, ma'am, we have help on the way. Just stay where you are." You tried to explain that you weren't cutting them short, but there were many calls backed up and other people who needed to talk.



Commissioner Gregory speaks with Manhattan Dispatch while operating at the command post approximately 10 minutes before the South Tower collapsed.

People would say, "Please stay on the phone with me. I want to talk to somebody. I don't want to be alone here." You can understand what that's like. Nobody wants to be alone. I said the same thing to myself when I was on the ground and the debris was coming down: "Please, God, don't let me die here. I don't want to die alone." I think that's a natural feeling. People don't want to be alone.

Then everything changed.

Yeah. When the building came down, everything ceased because there was nobody to talk to. You didn't hear anything. You didn't know where you were. You didn't know what the hell was going on.

What was that transition like, going from what you had just survived back to communications leader?

It wasn't easy. First, I had to — and it's a funny thing to say — determine whether I was still alive. I really didn't know. I was coming out of total darkness.

How long do you think it was until the radio chatter got going again?

I would say no longer than two or three minutes. It wasn't a long period of time, but to those of us

who were there, it seemed like an eternity. After I got my act together and figured out where I was and who I was, I got on the radio and told Dispatch what I had seen and what had happened. They were getting reports from everybody, but I felt it was my job to let them know what was going on. They called me several times with questions, and I communicated with them to the best of my ability, but I was in a state of shock.

Within a few minutes, they began directing the companies coming in. They warned the units in the tunnel: "Be careful. You're going into the tunnel, and you can't see anything." After that, there was constant communication back and forth on the radio.

Did any dispatchers break down in the moment, or did everybody stay composed?

Not one person failed to do what they were supposed to do. They just kept going. They knew what they were doing, what to say, how to handle the calls and how to tell people what to do.

I believe we took the person working the radio off to give them a break because they were inundated with messages.

After the first plane struck the North Tower, calls began pouring into FDNY Dispatch, many from individuals trapped inside the building. AP/Richard Drew



When did you see the dispatchers in person after 9/11?

We went to Manhattan a day or two later. I wanted to meet with the same crew that had been working that day, talk to them and see how they felt. I wanted to know whether they needed help or needed to talk to somebody. Everybody seemed to feel they had done their job, and that was it.

We talked about a lot of things. I think the best therapy is talking — getting it out of your system, especially when you're talking to people in the same profession.

Now that we're marking this milestone anniversary, do you think differently about how the dispatchers showed up and fulfilled the mission?

I think they went far beyond what they normally would do. I don't think they could have done any more, although they probably wish they could have. They were limited by the number of calls coming in and by not knowing exactly what had happened down there. They were in a remote location, trying to imagine what had happened while talking to people who were there.

“

Caller: Can someone stay on the phone with us?

Dispatch: No, we can't, sir. Somebody will get to you.

FDNY DISPATCH TRANSCRIPTS

Do you think the general public — or even other department members — realize the trauma the dispatchers faced?

As for the general public, people don't really know what a dispatcher does until they need help — until they call and realize they're talking to somebody. Other than that, they don't know what we do.

But I think anybody in our profession, whether they were with the dispatchers or not, understood what they were going through. Other departments across the country and throughout the world understood. I got calls from people in different places, and everybody had a sense of what the dispatchers were going through. They would say, "They did a fantastic job." I said they went beyond fantastic. I don't know what the next level beyond fantastic is. They maintained control and composure. If they lose that, everything is out the window. They had to control the operation even though they weren't at the scene.

They were determining what units had to be sent and where those units would come from. If all those units were committed, they had to figure out how to maintain coverage. There were going to be other fires in the city, so they needed companies positioned nearby and ready to respond.

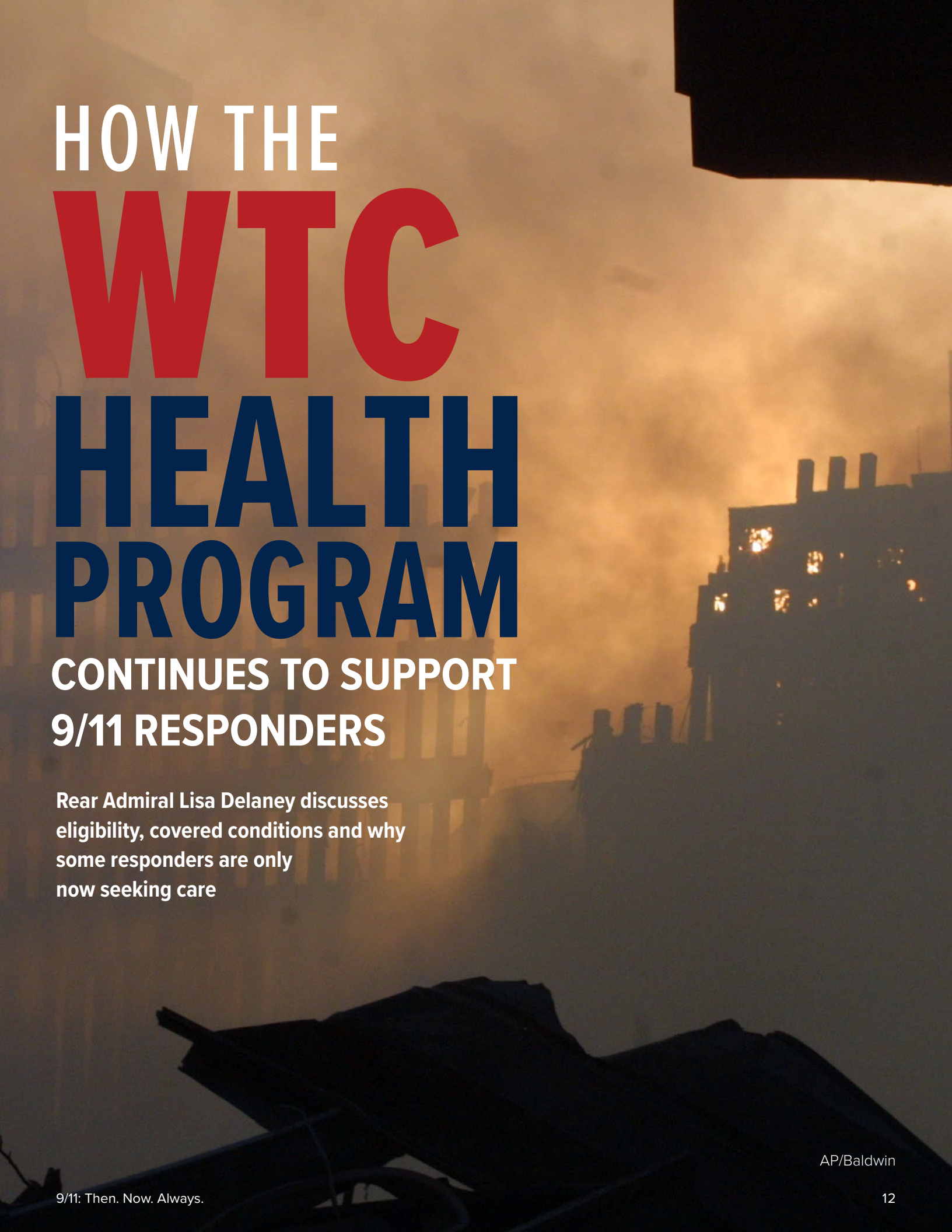
All those decisions had to be made on top of managing the World Trade Center response. That wasn't their only responsibility. They had to move apparatus and keep companies strategically located. They also had to staff the communications office.

We called personnel to come in, but we didn't have to bring them in. People who were off duty called and said they were coming. It's part of the job. It's part of the life. That's the life of people in the fire service, whether you're a firefighter or a dispatcher.

Twenty-five years after 9/11, Gregory sees evidence that the dispatchers' contribution is becoming more widely recognized. Dispatch has become a promotional pathway into the uniformed force — a pathway his own grandson took, starting his career as an FDNY dispatcher, then moving into EMS and ultimately becoming a firefighter in Brooklyn. This pathway is a fitting continuation of both his family's service and the department's growing appreciation for the operational knowledge and experience dispatchers bring to the fireground.

Read more about Gregory's 9/11 experience at firerescue1.com/Sept11dispatchers ¹





HOW THE **WTC** HEALTH PROGRAM

CONTINUES TO SUPPORT
9/11 RESPONDERS

Rear Admiral Lisa Delaney discusses
eligibility, covered conditions and why
some responders are only
now seeking care

For nearly 15 years, the World Trade Center Health Program has provided medical monitoring and treatment for responders and survivors with health conditions linked to their 9/11 exposures. As the 25th anniversary approaches, the Program continues to enroll thousands of new members each year, including responders who may only now be connecting a current diagnosis to exposures from decades ago.

For U.S. Public Health Service Rear Admiral Lisa Delaney, director of the Program, the milestone is also personal. Early in her career at NIOSH, she supported the agency's 9/11 response from Atlanta, helping deploy staff, identify hazards and provide technical support. The experience shaped the next two decades of her career in emergency preparedness and responder safety. Leading the WTC Health Program, she said, has brought that work full circle, from trying to protect responders during disasters to caring for those who are still living with the consequences of exposures that could not be prevented.

FireRescue1 connected with RDML Delaney to talk about how the Program has evolved, why eligible responders are still enrolling, and what firefighters should know about the care and support available to them.

FireRescue1: For firefighters who may not be familiar with the WTC Health Program, can you explain its mission?

Delaney: The Program was created under the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2010, which took effect in 2011. Before that, there were grassroots efforts and different funding mechanisms, but the Program was formally established and organized in 2011. It was later reauthorized through 2090, so this program is going to outlive all of us.

Our goal is to build awareness because there are still many people who may be eligible for the Program but have not connected the dots. It has been nearly 25 years, and they may not realize that health conditions they have now could be related to exposures from the day of the attacks, as well as the cleanup and recovery efforts.

ABOUT THE WTC HEALTH PROGRAM

- The WTC Health Program provides specialized high-quality, compassionate medical monitoring and treatment for WTC-related conditions to those directly affected by the 9/11 attacks in New York, at the Pentagon, and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.
- The Program serves more than 140,000 members, including nearly 88,000 responders.
- There are no copays and no deductibles for treatments for certified WTC-related health conditions.
- The Program funds [medical research](#) into physical and mental health conditions related to WTC exposures.

We want people to learn about the Program and understand that we are here to help. We are a growing program. We add about 10,000 members a year, and approximately 3,000 of those new members are responders.

People can learn more at cdc.gov/wtc. We have information about eligibility, but it is not one-size-fits-all. Eligibility depends on factors such as where you were, how long you were there and when you were there.

We outline those requirements online, and we also have a call center. If someone needs additional help, the call center can walk them through the application process.

Were you surprised to see that many people are still enrolling? Why do you think some responders wait so long to join the program?

I think it is a combination of people not understanding the Program and people not coming to us until they are sick and need care. They may also be in a different position with their insurance now, and the Program becomes more relevant to them.

We cover conditions that are related to 9/11 exposures. There is a [list of covered conditions](#), including cancers, respiratory disorders, digestive disorders and mental health conditions. A condition must be certified. That means there has to be documentation, and there is a process to determine whether the condition qualifies. Once it is certified, the Program covers treatment for that condition at no out-of-pocket cost. There are no deductibles and no copays. Once people understand that, joining the Program becomes very appealing.

Another issue may be that people assume the Program is limited to New York City, where most of our members are located. But we have a national program in addition to clinics in the New York metropolitan area. We have members in every state, so location should not be an obstacle to receiving care through the Program.

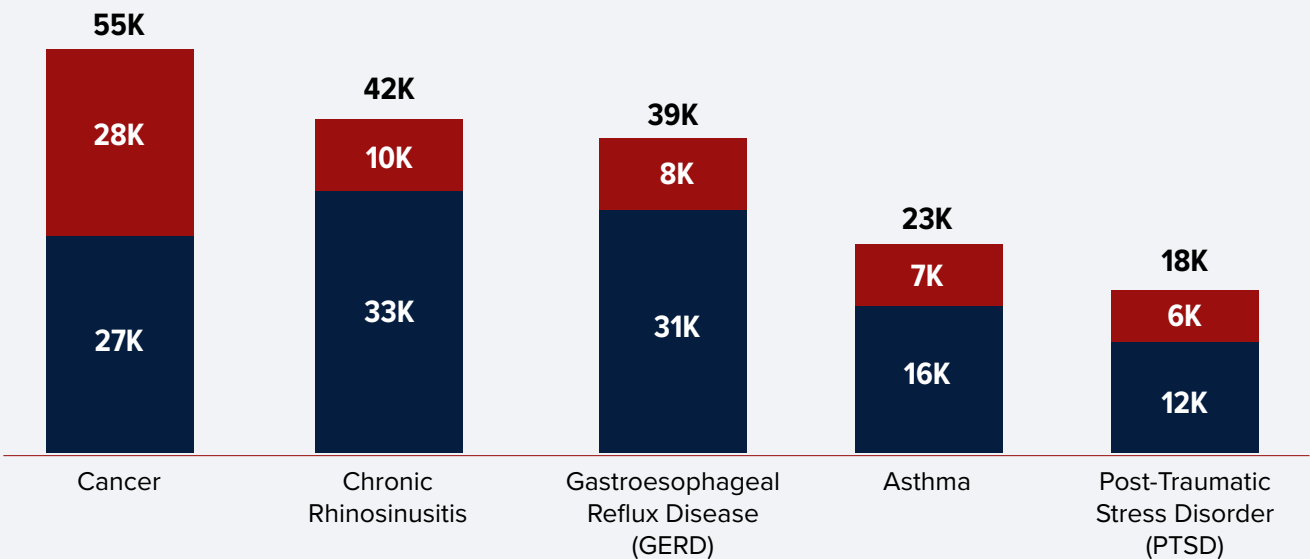
We hope the application process is straightforward because we are not trying to make it complicated. We want to build our membership and serve the people who deserve this care.

TOP 5 CERTIFIED CONDITIONS

Number of members over the program lifetime

■ Responder

■ Survivor



Source: [WTC Health Program quarterly program summary — May 2026](#)



How has the program evolved as research has identified additional health conditions and cancers?

The Program has evolved and matured. In the beginning, it was a shoestring operation trying to launch very quickly and get care to people. Today, there is a process through which anyone can petition to add a condition to the list of covered conditions. That petition goes through a scientific evaluation to determine whether it meets the criteria. That gives us the ability to add conditions as the science develops. Cancers were added through that petition process several years ago, and the Program now covers all cancers that meet our certification requirements.

Could additional conditions still emerge years from now?

Yes, and that's because many 9/11-related conditions have a latency period. Just because someone didn't become sick immediately after their 9/11 exposure doesn't mean a condition that develops years later isn't related to it.

That's why we provide annual monitoring. Members have access to yearly monitoring examinations so we can stay connected with them and follow their health over time. The Program provides treatment, but annual monitoring is also an important component to help catch conditions early to improve health outcomes.

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ACTIVE
RESEARCH
GRANTS

“Ongoing research helps us learn more about the health effects of 9/11 exposures, identify better ways to treat members and improve health outcomes.” — Delaney



The WTC Health Program covers conditions that are related to 9/11 exposures, including cancers, respiratory disorders, digestive disorders and mental health conditions. Photo/WTC Health Program

Do members take advantage of the monitoring program?

They do. I hear stories about the clinics in New York where there is such strong camaraderie among members that some schedule their appointments on the same day so they can see one another.

We know there are many obstacles to seeking healthcare, but when people feel comfortable, feel valued and build relationships with their clinicians, they are more likely to seek care. I think that is part of why we are seeing improved health outcomes. Members are going to the doctor. They are receiving early diagnoses and appropriate treatment, and they are doing it in a place where they feel comfortable and safe. That is one of the important benefits of the clinics across the New York metropolitan area and with the providers in our nationwide provider network.

What does the research show about the impact of the Program?

WTC Health Program membership appears to be linked to [responder members living longer lives](#). Compared to non-members, responders had a 13% lower risk of death from any cause (mainly among men) and a 17% lower risk of death from smoking-related conditions.

Additionally, this Program makes a real difference in helping to improve the quality of life and positive health outcomes among our member population. In fact, the cancer-specific mortality rate for WTC Health Program enrollees is [34% lower](#) than demographically similar New York State residents with cancer. This shows that enrollment in the WTC Health Program, which includes access to cancer screening and case management, may improve cancer survival.

FDNY

CONNECTION

“FDNY is one of our clinical centers, and we work closely with FDNY’s clinical leadership. The Program has an active competitive research grant program, and we have funded FDNY research in the past.” — Delaney

How is the Program marking the 25th anniversary of 9/11?

It is an important milestone, and we are trying to balance honoring the memory of those who lost their lives with offering a message of hope. We want people to know that we are here to help those who responded and the survivors who deserve care and support for their health.

A major focus for us is raising awareness among people who may not know the Program exists or may not realize they are eligible. Young adults are a particular focus because they were so young at the time and may not have the same memories of the attacks or recognize the connection between their exposures and current health conditions.

What is your message to firefighters who worked at Ground Zero or supported the response from elsewhere in the country?

We have an extraordinary Program whose goal and mission are to provide high-quality care and treatment to responders and survivors of 9/11. I encourage people to review the enrollment requirements and determine whether they may be eligible. Contact us. We want to walk people through the process. Do not wait or delay considering enrollment.

There are many important benefits, and the Program is not limited to people living in New York. Even if you have never lived in New York but responded to the attacks, the Program has a nationwide network that can provide support. [1](#)





“THIS HAS NEVER BEEN ABOUT US”

CHIEF TERRY SHAFFER REFLECTS ON

FLIGHT 93

As firsthand witnesses grow fewer, the retired Shanksville fire chief considers what “**Never Forget**” means for those with no personal memory of 9/11

AP/Evan Vucci

On Sept. 11, 2001, Terry Shaffer led the Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department's response to the crash of United Flight 93 in a quiet Pennsylvania community that suddenly found itself at the center of one of the nation's darkest days. In the weeks and months that followed, Shaffer and his department remained at the crash site, supporting the recovery effort long after national attention had moved elsewhere.

When FireRescue1 spoke with Shaffer for the [20th anniversary of 9/11](#), he reflected on the response itself and the lasting impact it had on his department and community. Five years later, with only five or six firefighters who responded that day still active in the department, preserving their experiences has taken on new urgency as a younger generation enters the fire service with no personal memory of 9/11.

In our follow-up conversation, Shaffer reflects on how the community continues to honor the [passengers and crew of Flight 93](#), why Never Forget is more than a slogan and what it will take to ensure the lessons of Sept. 11 endure long after the last firsthand witnesses are gone.

FireRescue1: As we mark the 25-year remembrance of 9/11, what does the phrase “Never Forget” mean to you today?

Terry Shaffer: We simply cannot forget. It is not fair to the people who died on 9/11 to brush the anniversary off as another holiday or a day away from work.

We cannot let something like this happen again. It was an extraordinarily costly day in many ways. Education is a major part of that work at the [Flight 93 National Memorial](#). We also emphasize education at the fire station, particularly with new members or when groups of teachers or students visit.

Why is the education component so important?

Think back to 2001. You could not go anywhere without seeing the phrase “Never Forget.” Flags were flying everywhere, and there was a strong sense of unity. The only way we’re going to get back to that is by educating younger generations. As those of us who remember the day begin to pass away and move on, we need to make sure the next generations know exactly what happened.

How is the community marking this milestone year?

The biggest event will be at the [Flight 93 National Memorial](#). They will have their normal service in the morning, with the reading of the names and the ringing of the bells. Then they are having a second program after lunch, so it will basically be an all-day event.

Separately, for at least the past 23 years, we have opened our fire station for the entire day. If anyone stops by and wants something to eat, we feed them. Occasionally, the families come down. That is really how it started. We wanted to give the families a place to get out of the public's eye for a little while. And that's probably where I will end up this year.



Every year on Sept. 11, the Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department opens its fire station to the community for a meal and a safe place to connect with family and friends.

What do you hope people take away from the Flight 93 National Memorial when they visit?

I hope they consider how the passengers and crew responded. They could have stayed in the back of the plane and decided that this was it. Instead, they banded together and tried to respond. They may have prevented what could have been a much worse day on 9/11 if the plane had reached its intended target.

On the other side of that, visitors should ask themselves what they would have done. Could I have done what they did? Or would I have been the one who stayed in the back of the plane and remained quiet?

We were put in a position where we had to do our jobs, and we did them. But this has never been about us. It has always been about the 40 people on that plane and what they did in the sky.

What moments or lessons would you share with someone from another small town that is suddenly thrust into the national spotlight?

Something we have said almost from the beginning is that when you have an emergency, it does not matter how large it is. Whether it is a plane crash like the one we dealt with or something else, it always starts locally and ends locally.

Whoever comes in between to help is a blessing. The people who came here after the crash were some of the greatest people to work with. Everyone got along and worked toward the same goal: recovering as much as possible from the plane, the passengers and their personal effects.

But when those agencies pack up and go home, it is still your event. We have found that to be true to this day. I could probably go to the fire station now and open one or two bay doors, and within half an hour someone would stop to look around or ask questions.

I also tell people that this could happen in any small town. I would hope the outcome would be the same — that people would band together, work with the responding agencies and get through it.

How long did the recovery operation continue?

We spent a lot of time at the site for several weeks, even after the FBI and the other agencies left. The coroner was very insistent on identifying all 40 passengers and recovering as many remains and personal effects as possible.

We conducted another search in October. Then, around the end of March or beginning of April the following year, the coroner called volunteers back for another search because so much material remained in the trees.

Every time the wind blew, more would come down. Even today, after a windstorm, you can walk through the hemlock grove and find small pieces of the plane on the ground.

How do you ensure the act of remembering never becomes routine?

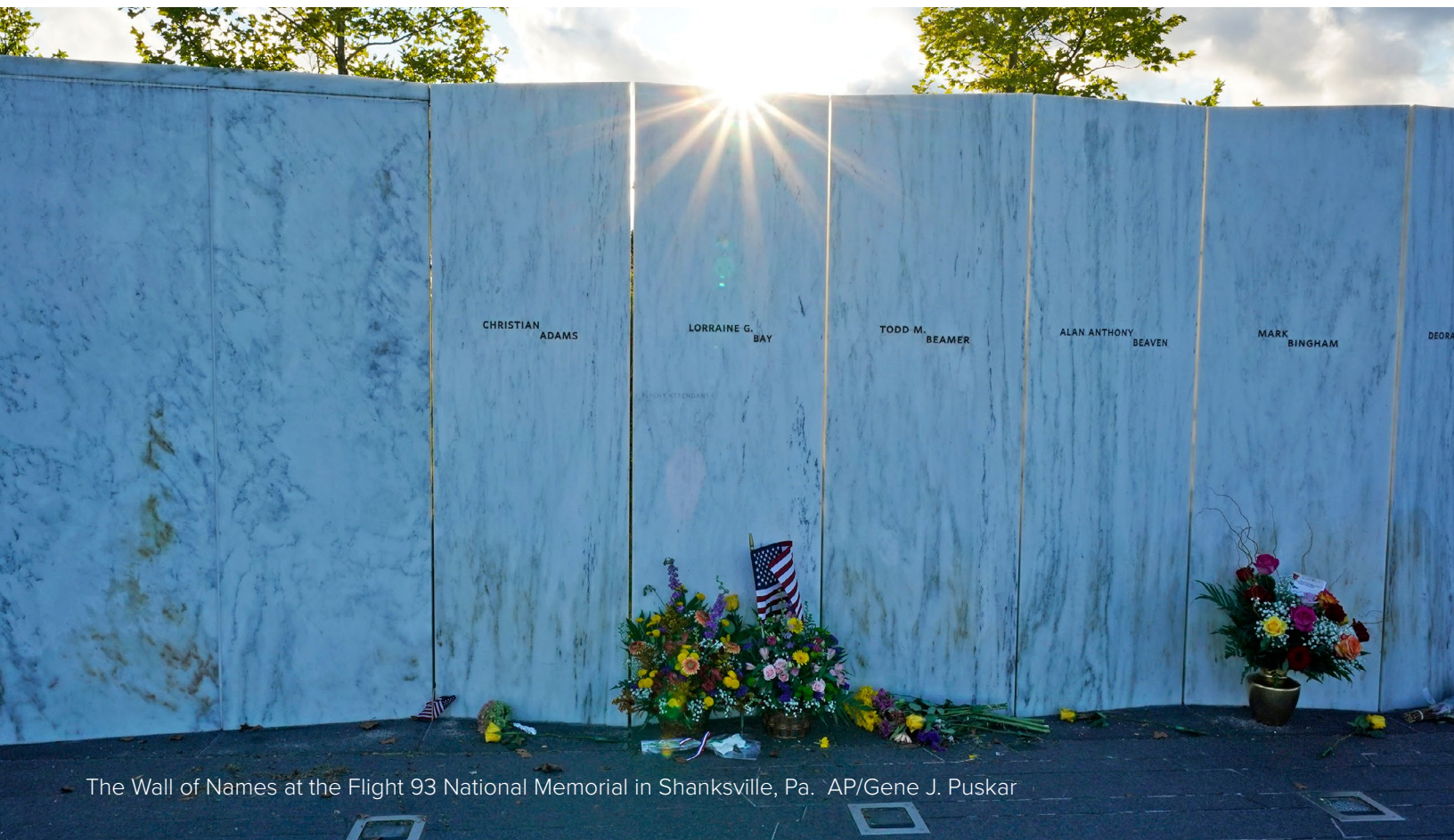
We are always ready to welcome people into the station and talk about 9/11. But what we have always done, more than anything, is open the station to the families so they can have a meal and spend time with us.

We have also served as the honor guard for the National Park Service, and we assist with different activities at the memorial.

As long as we remain involved, I think the memory will remain alive. I do not see that changing even after I am gone. The people here understand that they have to continue the work.

Our fire department president, Brad Shober, was a 9/11 responder. He was new to the department at the time, but he was here. He says all the time, “This is who we are.” People come here knowing that we responded on 9/11. We have to continue honoring the legacy of those 40 heroes.

Read the full interview at [firerescue1.com/ChiefShaffer. 1](http://firerescue1.com/ChiefShaffer.1))



The Wall of Names at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pa. AP/Gene J. Puskar



Twenty-five years later, preserving the memory of 9/11 remains as important as ever. For FDNY firefighters, Ground Zero is part of their department's history, even as the site has been rebuilt into a place of remembrance.

For many first responders from across the country, however, visiting Ground Zero is a way to pay their respects, reflect on the sacrifices made that day, and better understand an event that forever changed the fire service. And for them, few places tell the 9/11 story better than the museums dedicated to preserving the history of that unimaginable day.

New York City is home to two distinct 9/11 museums. One stands at the heart of Ground Zero itself. The other, a few miles away, focuses almost exclusively on the rescue and recovery operation through the experiences of the firefighters, police officers, construction workers and countless others who worked the pile. Here's

what to expect from two museums that offer different but complementary perspectives on the attacks and the years-long rescue and recovery effort.

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum: The official story of 9/11

Located at the World Trade Center site, the National September 11 Memorial & Museum is the country's official memorial to the victims of the 9/11 attacks and the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. It honors those killed, documents the attacks, and preserves thousands of artifacts, oral histories and personal stories.

The experience begins outdoors at the Memorial Plaza, where two massive reflecting pools occupy the footprints of the Twin Towers. Bronze parapets surrounding the pools are engraved with the names of every victim.



For first responders, the museum itself is the centerpiece.

Located approximately 70 feet below ground, it incorporates portions of the original World Trade Center foundation into the museum's architecture, allowing visitors to stand on the actual bedrock beneath the towers.

Unlike many historical museums, the National 9/11 Museum places visitors among the physical remains of the attacks. Highlights include:

- FDNY apparatus crushed during the collapse
- Steel columns from the Twin Towers
- The “Last Column,” covered with tributes from recovery workers
- Portions of the original slurry wall that held back the Hudson River
- PPE worn by firefighters and recovery workers
- Dispatch recordings, radio transmissions and survivor testimony
- Photographs documenting rescue operations and recovery efforts

The museum combines these artifacts with multimedia exhibits, videos, audio recordings and personal narratives to explain not only what happened on 9/11 but also the months-long rescue and recovery operation that followed.





The 9/11 Museum Workshop: A firefighter's view of "the pile"

Less well-known but deeply respected among many first responders is the Ground Zero Museum Workshop. Located in Manhattan's Meatpacking District, the museum was founded by photographer Gary Suson, who received unprecedented access to document the nine-month recovery effort after the attacks.

Unlike the National Museum, the Workshop focuses almost entirely on what happened after 9/11 rather than the attacks themselves.

What makes the 9/11 Museum Workshop different

The Workshop contains approximately 100 photographs, artifacts and audio presentations documenting daily life during the recovery operation. Many artifacts are small and deeply personal:

- Recovery tools
- Dust-covered equipment

- Personal items recovered from the site
- Photographs taken from locations inaccessible to the public
- Audio stories told by firefighters, police officers, ironworkers and recovery personnel

Visitors receive an audio tour featuring the voices of people who worked at Ground Zero, accompanied by ambient sounds recorded during the recovery effort.

Rather than emphasizing the scale of the disaster, the Workshop focuses on individual experiences — what it felt like to spend months searching through debris, recovering victims and preserving evidence.

Seeing the full story

Together, the two museums offer a fuller view of 9/11 — one documenting the attacks and their immediate impact, the other preserving the personal experiences of those who worked the recovery effort. For first responders visiting New York, each provides a distinct reason to make the trip. [1](#)

ABOUT THE SPONSOR

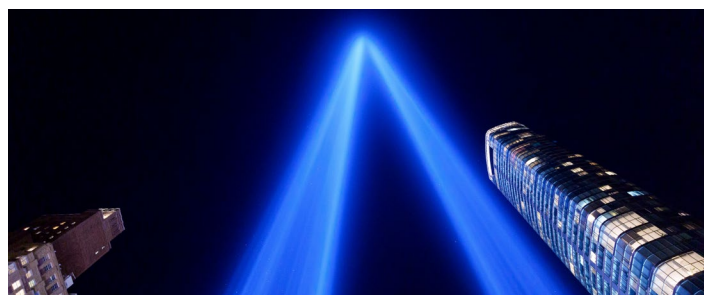


FirstNet® is the only nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform dedicated to and purpose-built for America's first responders and the extended public safety community. Shaped by the vision of Congress and the first responder community following the events of 9/11, FirstNet stands above commercial offerings. It is built with [AT&T](#) in public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government. The FirstNet network provides first responders with truly dedicated coverage and capacity when they need it, the unique benefits of always-on priority and preemption across 5G and LTE, and high-quality Band 14 spectrum. These advanced capabilities help fire, law enforcement, and EMS protect their communities. Learn more at [FirstNet.com](#).



THE STORY OF THE LIST

FDNY Captain (ret.) Frank Leto explains how a list of scribbled names on yellow legal pads ultimately became FDNY's official missing and deceased list — the 343.



HOW 9/11 TRANSFORMED FDNY

Former FDNY Commissioner Sal Cassano recounts the sweeping changes in training, command, communications and accountability that followed 9/11.



PROTECTING THE PROMISE MADE TO 9/11 VICTIMS

Representative Peter King (ret.) details the history of the Zadroga Act, underscoring how hard lawmakers, advocates and 9/11 responders fought to secure care.

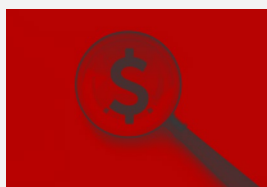


PREPARING FOR THE INCIDENT WE HAVEN'T IMAGINED

Deputy Chief Rocco Alvaro explains why the lasting lessons of 9/11 call for resilient departments, adaptable leaders and the ability to maintain operations when critical systems fail.



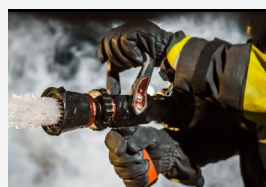
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