

## Risks don't slow volunteer resolve

By TOM DRURY

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The work was slow. From one hand to another, buckets were sent down the line filled with metal, concrete, paper and dirt.

An American flag had been raised high on the slope.

Elsewhere at the site, which one detective estimated easily took up a square quarter-mile, police photographers took pictures, and people struggled to put a tent down in the wind.

A body may have been found, explained a police officer.

Then about 4 o'clock, the sound of groaning steel came from one of three skyscrapers still standing along the eastern side of Church Street.

The damage to these buildings was significant and worrisome. Facades were crusted with dull, silver dust, windows were broken and some of the frames appeared twisted against the sky. The groaning sound may have come from One Liberty Plaza, the instability of which had been of concern throughout the day.

In any case, the signal went out to run.

Many did so, along the broad gravel road that Church Street has become since the jet attack on the World Trade Center towers.

Some of those who had not run for safety were the members of the bucket brigade. They stayed on their mountain, with their flag, because people might be in there. One Liberty Plaza remained standing. This had happened before, and there was work to do.

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Thursday's rescue effort at the World Trade Center brought with it new dangers from wobbly buildings nearby and the fear of hazardous dust in the air. As the day wore on, the signs of promise everyone sought were hard to come by, and the gruesome toll of Tuesday's terrorist attack on the World Trade Center became clearer.

New York Mayor Rudy Guiliani said 94 bodies had been recovered, as well as 70 body parts. The city had some 30,000 body bags available, he said.

"I'm sorry that I have to describe it that way, but that's unfortunately the situation we're facing," said the mayor, who was preparing to play host to President Bush on Friday.

Nearly 260 firefighters and police officers were among the missing. Some say it will be a miracle if others are found alive.

One rumor that initially provided a ray of hope Thursday was word that five firefighters had been pulled alive from the rubble after being trapped in a vehicle since Tuesday. It wasn't true. Officials later said that only two firefighters had been found and that they had been trapped in an air pocket for only a few hours.

Still there are other signs of hope.

One volunteer told of finding a firefighter Wednesday buried up to his chest in rubble. An unconfirmed number of firefighters were rescued Thursday afternoon from a landslide that morning. That makes the excavating a delicate process.

Much of it is done by hand. And even this work is halted from time to time to bring in dogs to search for survivors or for bodies.

The debris goes into buckets and then loaders, and finally into dump trucks that cart the rubble to Staten Island. The metal and steel are transported to a location where the FBI can examine it.

"We found last night, it looked like, four to five pieces of the airplane and gave them to the FBI," said Vic Cipullo, an off-duty New York City police detective volunteering at the site.

Bodies that are found are moved to two air-conditioned trailers serving as a temporary morgue.

The many volunteers spoke of arduous work and horrific sights.

"Last night -- I don't want to describe what we brought out of there; it's not right," said Bob Crystal, a retired New York police officer, who volunteered to help cart debris. "The best way to describe it is, you don't want to leave. The country's under siege and there are people there that might still be alive, and there are a lot of people in there who have families that need to find out about them."

So far, about 2,000 survivors have been hospitalized.

Guiliani said 4,763 people had been reported missing. A Missing Persons Command Center was set up Thursday to assist friends and family members searching for loved ones.

The line to get in stretched around the block. Family members learned that the usual identifying information would not suffice; they were asked to provide dental records, military records and details about physical characteristics.

Along with the fear of what has already happened, there is a new fear of more danger in the air. The Environmental Protection Agency is looking at using Superfund money to help clean up the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Tests of rubble from the World Trade Center show elevated levels of asbestos, EPA spokesman Chris Paulitz said Thursday.

But EPA testing in Brooklyn, a mile and a half downwind from the World Trade Center wreckage, shows lead, asbestos and organic chemicals in the air are either undetectable or not at high enough levels to cause concern, Paulitz said.

Rumors, bomb threats and uncertainty also marked the day. Hours after airlines resumed service, landings in New York were halted late Thursday because of unspecified "FBI activity."

Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik said five or six people had been detained and one person arrested at John F. Kennedy airport. He said the one arrested had tried to clear security with a fake pilot's identification.

"We're talking to them -- we'll know more later," he said.

Despite all the dangers, volunteers continued to stream to the site and continue the job.

One volunteer, Lt. Col Ellen McArthur of Red Bank, N.J., wore a green camouflage uniform, carrying a U.S. flag from the site. Seeing the site made her think of her friends, she said, including one who is a lawyer who worked at the WTC and is missing.

"You know, I don't look up there and think about Somebody Bin Laden," McArthur said. "He's just someone on TV. I think about my friends."

- Information from Times wires was used in this report.

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