

Alexandria Times

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Alexandria's response on 9/11

Friday is the 25th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as Flight 93, whose passengers bravely prevented it from flying into the U.S. Capitol.

When American Airlines Flight 77 struck the Pentagon, Alexandria's first responders answered the call to help other Northern Virginia emergency responders that day. While the enduring images of that day focus on the World Trade Center, the attack on the Pentagon and the resilience of Americans that day is memorialized by a photo by Michael Pendergrass of fire personnel hanging an American flag on the building. One of the firefighters captured in the photo was a member of the Alexandria Fire Department.

Another emergency responder that day was Officer Francis Powers of the Alexan-

dria Police Department. Many years later, Powers remembered that day starting like any other. His wife went to her office two blocks from the White House, and his 1-year-old son was dropped off at childcare.

Powers found out about the first planes flying into the World Trade Center towers while he waited for court proceedings to begin. The third plane struck the Pentagon at 9:45 a.m.

Powers reached his wife and found out that she was part of the pedestrian exodus from Washington, D.C., to Virginia. His son was picked up by his grandmother. His first assignment in response to the attack was to make sure that the on-ramp for Interstate 395 off King Street remained clear for ambulances to bring injured people from the Pentagon to Inova Alexandria Hospital.

Powers recalled that the

Patrol Division 21 Assignment Sheet									
Command #	Serial #	Unit #	Feb #	Remarks	Unit #	Serial #	Unit #	Feb #	Remarks
1	1001	201			1	1001	201		
2	1002	202			2	1002	202		
3	1003	203			3	1003	203		
4	1004	204			4	1004	204		
5	1005	205			5	1005	205		
6	1006	206			6	1006	206		
7	1007	207			7	1007	207		
8	1008	208			8	1008	208		
9	1009	209			9	1009	209		
10	1010	210			10	1010	210		
11	1011	211			11	1011	211		
12	1012	212			12	1012	212		
13	1013	213			13	1013	213		
14	1014	214			14	1014	214		
15	1015	215			15	1015	215		
16	1016	216			16	1016	216		
17	1017	217			17	1017	217		
18	1018	218			18	1018	218		
19	1019	219			19	1019	219		
20	1020	220			20	1020	220		
21	1021	221			21	1021	221		
22	1022	222			22	1022	222		
23	1023	223			23	1023	223		
24	1024	224			24	1024	224		
25	1025	225			25	1025	225		
26	1026	226			26	1026	226		
27	1027	227			27	1027	227		
28	1028	228			28	1028	228		
29	1029	229			29	1029	229		
30	1030	230			30	1030	230		
31	1031	231			31	1031	231		
32	1032	232			32	1032	232		
33	1033	233			33	1033	233		
34	1034	234			34	1034	234		
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53	1053	253			53	1053	253		
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56	1056	256			56	1056	256		
57	1057	257			57	1057	257		
58	1058	258			58	1058	258		
59	1059	259			59	1059	259		
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72	1072	272			72	1072	272		
73	1073	273			73	1073	273		
74	1074	274			74	1074	274		
75	1075	275			75	1075	275		
76	1076	276			76	1076	276		
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78	1078	278			78	1078	278		
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86	1086	286			86	1086	286		
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95	1095	295			95	1095	295		
96	1096	296			96	1096	296		
97	1097	297			97	1097	297		
98	1098	298			98	1098	298		
99	1099	299			99	1099	299		
100	1100	300			100	1100	300		

PHOTO/INSPECTOR FRANCIS POWERS

The duty roster for the Alexandria Police Department on Sept. 11, 2001.

number of ambulances was much smaller than they had anticipated. The attack on the Pentagon killed 125 people in the building and all 64 people on Flight 77.

Powers' said his enduring memories from that day were the smell of burning fuel, the rain of particles and ash from the Pentagon fire and the contrast with the beautiful weather. The black plume of smoke from the fire was vis-

ible from Alexandria City Hall.

It took multiple days to put out the fire. Repairs to the Pentagon were finished by September 2002, and the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial formally opened on Sept. 11, 2008.

This column was initially published Sept. 14, 2023. It has been updated for clarity.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.