

SEPT. 11, 2001

25 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



CWA LOCAL 1101 GENERATOR

SEPTEMBER 11, 2026

A LIFETIME AGO, LIKE YESTERDAY



Line gang and CXM techs preparing cables to run along the sidewalk to restore service quickly

It's hard to believe it's been 25 years since September 11, 2001, a day forever etched in our memories. Nearly 3000 people were killed, including 32 CWA members in New York City, Pennsylvania and Washington DC.

There were more than a thousand CWA members working out of Verizon headquarters at 140 West Street at the time of 9/11. Central Office Technicians, Service Reps, Administrative Assistants, Installation & Repair, Construction, Maintenance, Air Pressure, Line Gang, Specials and CTS technicians, Empire City Subway Plant Inspectors and Construction Coordinators, Mechanics, and Watch Engineers reported out of 140 West St or were working in the area. Some Field Techs reported directly out of 2 World Trade Center and many more Local 1101 members were working at Broad St, Varick St, 375 Pearl St, and 11 Broadway on that day.

CWA members at Verizon, AT&T Mobility and Verizon Wireless were there from Day 1, setting up emergency telecommunication services for firefighters, police, the FBI, hospitals, the City's command center, rescue workers and other essential service providers. Long after the cameras were gone, our members were restoring telecommunication service throughout lower Manhattan, rebuilding the entire network.

We're proud of what we did that day, and in the months and years afterward. Twenty-five years later, we know the price so many of our members and their families paid. We have co-workers and friends who have died from 9/11 related illnesses. Many of us are currently undergoing treatment at the World Trade Center Health Program, preventatively or for certified 9/11 illnesses.

This 25 year anniversary Generator is a glimpse into that day and the massive restoration effort that followed, in our own words.

IN OUR OWN WORDS

“We were doing direct buries with the cable. We’d take the blacktop and concrete off, and put on steel plates. Then we’d drop temporary 3600 pair cables for line gang and splicers.

We helped build Verizon City. We removed the debris with back hoes, and manually with shovels and picks. It was hard labor. Asses to elbows we called it. We didn’t stop, we were working 12, sometimes 20-hour shifts. We knew how important it was to get communication up.

We were down there for a year. I don’t think Empire got the recognition they deserved for working at 9/11. It wasn’t easy. It was stressful.

I’m certified for a number of 9/11 related illnesses. A lot of my co-workers got sick working there. I tell anyone who isn’t enrolled in the World Trade Center Health program that they should sign up. You can’t slack on your health. That’s the most important thing, for yourself and your family. You want to be around.”

Nick Addonisio, Empire City Subway Utility Worker on 9/11



ECS workers Matt Rivera, Nick Addonisio, Garry Benson. Photo: Greg Neenan

Message from the President

Whatever our experience on 9/11, that day is forever in our memories.



I think about the people who worked in the Towers, the passengers in the planes, the flight attendants, who were CWA members, the firefighters, the police, the rescue workers. So many people are still feeling the impact of 9/11.

There were CWA members from all five boroughs working downtown. It was a union-wide effort. We worked together. Technicians from Northern Manhattan were sent to Ground Zero, and technicians from the Bronx covered their work in northern and midtown Manhattan.

We didn’t know what we were breathing in at the time. We were told everything was ok. We found out years later that wasn’t the case. The fact we’ve had to fight with Verizon to prove we were down there doing the work is disgraceful.

Overall CWA, our Local, New York City - we stood tall and did what had to be done. Twenty five years later, I couldn’t be more proud of our members and retirees.

**Keith Purce, CWA Local 1101 President
Chief Steward for Bronx & Manhattan
mechanics on 9/11**

IN OUR OWN WORDS

“It was chaos down there. ECS set up wooden shacks around 140 West St. The cables were run along the street, into the shack. We’d put the cables on the racks and prepare them for splicing.

When they cleared the manholes around the pit we would assess what was damaged and get the manholes ready for the new cables. We cut away the damaged cables from the Central Office or from the block. We had to replace everything.

We were working 12-16 shifts. You could see nothing but destruction. The air was littered with all sorts of dust and chemicals.

You would hear a siren go off when they found somebody. Then we would see the police or the fire department carry someone out. That stuck with me, the eeriness of the silence, all quiet but the machines.”

Matt Clancy, Splicer at Lincoln Ave on 9/11

“We built an air compressor room in Verizon City on Greenwich Street. We pulled the compressors in and built a room around it. Then we ran air pipes over the street into manholes to try to save existing cables.

We were supplying air to Barclay and Church Streets. They were worried the Century 21 building was going to come down. Every once in a while a horn would go off, and that meant they thought the building might come down and we had to run to Canal St.

Two weeks after being down there we were fitted for masks. One thing I remember clearly is ‘Morgue’ was spray painted on the side of a giant Burger King on Church Street. That’s where they would take the bodies. That morgue sticks out to me the most.”

Pat Hunt, Cable Maintenance at 34 St on 9/11



Technicians bring in air compressors. Everything had to be rebuilt.

IN OUR OWN WORDS

“We were sent to 375 Pearl Street. Most of the cables were damaged with the Towers coming down. Our job was to recover whatever we could, and move lines to good copper. Everything was burnt.

It was very chaotic. The dust and the smoke were everywhere. You could smell it. You could see it in people's faces. They were like ‘why did this happen?’

There was a Central Office Technician from Second Avenue whose wife was six months pregnant. She was working at Cantor Fitzgerald. Every day he went to Ground Zero looking for his wife or her remains. Every time I think about 9/11 I think about him and I get goosebumps. What can you say? Words can't describe it.”

Julius Dizon, 2nd Ave Installation & Repair Tech on 9/11



Cable splicers Bobby Chew and Tommy Schaeffer in the vault at 140 West St. This photo appeared in the NY Generator one year anniversary issue October 2001.



Todd Hollritt and the cellular antennae he and AT&T Mobility co-workers set up

AT&T wanted to provide coverage to lower Manhattan. They sent me to Paramus to set up microwave links and cellular service for lower Manhattan because I was familiar with the area and they wanted me to figure out where to put the equipment.

They said they were getting 911 calls from the rubble. We were the first cellular team into Manhattan. We monitored cell phone signals and looked for signal patterns to try to determine the location of the callers because no one could see where the calls were coming from. No one had ever tried that before. Unfortunately we couldn't correlate with the equipment we had put together.

All lower Manhattan was dark. My co-worker Jeff was working in New Jersey. They redirected some microwave to the equipment we set up in an open field in Jersey City to focus. We got a signal back into lower Manhattan by early morning of the 12th.”

Todd Hollritt, AT&T Mobility Field Tech and volunteer firefighter

IN OUR OWN WORDS

“I got off the train, people were screaming that a plane had hit a building. I looked at the WTC and I realized it was on fire, with a big gaping hole. I was in disbelief, total shock. I saw what appeared to be confetti coming from the people. Then I realized it was people, they were jumping out the windows. It was so sad, so scary.

The next day we reported to Willoughby Street in Brooklyn, where they did training. That's where we went to work to try to get the Stock Exchange up. The stock exchange had totally crashed. All the major banks, so many companies, all their communications were down. We had to get those trunks back up so the phones would work. We had to learn new systems on the fly to get everyone back up.

They finally let us back into 140 West Street to see if we had any belongings there. I worked on the 13th floor. When I got to my area there was a big hole where my desk had been. If I had gotten to work a little earlier I might not be here.”

**Derrick Smith, Service Representative
at 140 West Street on 9/11**



Local 1101 members worked inside and outside to restore service



140 West Street, hit by debris from 7 WTC

“We were trying to restore emergency service as fast as possible. The first thing they had us do was restore services for 911, for the Police and Fire Departments to communicate with each other. We had no electricity in the building, we were using flashlights.

The first day when we were leaving Ground Zero, we were exhausted, we were in shock. There were people clapping, crying, hugging and praying for us. We felt like we were really doing something.

We stayed working at 140 West Street. We had to climb the stairs - 8 flights every couple of hours. Our breakroom had no walls. You could walk out the building until you fell out. Later they put plastic mesh up.

We were wiring up the frames with FDNY there because they were afraid the equipment was going to catch on fire. The frame was hanging off the building because the wall was missing on that side, where 7 World Trade had collapsed.”

**Maria Ambrosiole-Goldberg and
Bernie Burgess, COTs at 140 West St**

IN OUR OWN WORDS

“We got a police escort from Brooklyn. We were at the corner of Vesey and West Streets, putting up the first Mobile Cell site. We were trying to get T1 lines from 140 West Street to that mobile cell site. The landline guys were trying to get them to our mobile site.

If I remember correctly they ran the T1s out of the building up in the air. Once they got them to us we were able to program and configure them and get the first cell site working.

After we got that one up we spent the rest of the time going around Ground Zero trying to get the cell sites up where buildings had collapsed. I worked 12 hour shifts all over lower Manhattan for the duration. All the Verizon Wireless cellular field engineers did.

I remember walking up to Ground Zero on Sept 11 and seeing the first wave of firemen and police come out. They had that white soot on them. A lot of them were crying.”

Rich Hartman, Verizon Wireless Cellular Field Engineer



Every 3600 pair cable had to be respliced.

“My first job was at 1 Liberty Plaza. We were taking off lead sleeves, putting them back on, rerouting cables so they could get back in service. One big issue was concern that the manholes might collapse. OSHA had to check the manhole and determine if it was good to go into.

I just went for my yearly check up at the WTC Health Program. In the beginning I didn't sign up, I thought 'I'm fine, it's for other people who really need it, firefighters and police'. More recently I thought 'Let me do it', and with the Union's help I did.”

Monica Lopera, Cable maintenance at King Street on 9/11

“I remember the cell phones ringing under the debris. You knew it was loved ones calling, hoping. Our phone company ID got us access everywhere. Having all that access was a blessing and a curse. You couldn't walk away, but seeing it every day was torture.

That pile, the skeleton of the building. You had to face it to get past it. It was a lot to keep showing up every day.”

Barbara Jermann, COT at 375 Pearl St on 9/11



The damage to 140 West St was extensive

IN OUR OWN WORDS

“We saw it happen. Our managers called us back to the yard. The next day we took all the copper cables out and we put them along the sidewalk. We built a wooden barricade around the cables so they wouldn’t get damaged. Then we put cement along the side so if water came it didn’t get wet. I did that for two weeks.

A month later we all had to go down. They had OSHA there. We were sent back to try to assist with the manholes, which were damaged. Some bricks were sticking out, some were sticking in. It looked like someone had twisted the manholes. We used the racks to pull the cables against the walls so the splicers could work.

When you came out, the sanitation trucks washed down your truck -and you- to make sure you didn’t take the contamination out of the area.”

Tim King, Utility Worker at Empire City Subway on 9/11



ECS workers were working at Ground Zero from Day 1

Did you work downtown on or after Sept 11, 2001?

Are you enrolled in the World Trade Center Health Program?

If you lived or worked near Ground Zero following 9/11, and never registered with the World Trade Center Health Program **it's not too late.**

We've helped hundreds of members and retirees enroll. Go to www.cdc.gov to learn more.

Call CWA Local 1101 at 212-633-2666 for more information and assistance.

Are you enrolled in the WTCHP but stopped going to yearly screenings? Not sure if you're enrolled? Call WTCHP at 888-982-4748 to set up a screening or see if you're enrolled.



Techs put air pressure on the cables to keep water out

In Memory of

**Our family members,
co-workers, friends and
fellow union members who died
from 9/11 related illnesses**



Never forgotten

