



BCCRS Honors the Lives Lost on September 11, 2001 and Reflects on the Squad's Response

On the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks, we honor the memory of the lives lost on that fateful day and the impact of the loss on their family, friends, and communities. Our community and the nation were changed forever.

We also reflect on the dedication of the BCCRS members who answered the call and responded by doing what they knew best – step up, provide professional fire/rescue service, and make a positive difference in times of need. Here is the story of how the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad responded on that unforgettable day and an important lesson that resonates to this day for BCCRS members and their families and friends.

The day started out as a normal one at the Rescue Squad. Daytime Supervisor Frank Gaegler was in charge when news broke of the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. Approximately 45 minutes later, came the news of the Pentagon attack. Soon thereafter the DC Fire and EMS Department (DCFEMS) called to ask what units were available for transfer to Washington, DC. As volunteers were coming in, Chief Gaegler reported that three medic units, a heavy fire/rescue squad, an air unit, and a duty chief were available. DCFEMS requested that two medic units and a Squad be transferred to DC. Enroute, units were redirected—Medic 10 was assigned directly to the Pentagon, while the Squad filled in at DCFEMS Rescue 1 on F Street NW. Air 1 was transferred to Arlington. Chief Gaegler accompanied the units to the Pentagon.

Paramedic Bob Landry was attending a child safety seat installation class at the Public Safety Training Academy when the attacks occurred. Upon the class's immediate dismissal, he returned to the Rescue Squad. He was assigned to Medic 11, along with driver Noelia Magowan and other volunteers. While en route to a DCFEMS station, they were redirected to the Pentagon. They arrived just as a group of Marines was evacuating due to reports of another incoming aircraft. After briefly staging, the crew loaded stretchers and gear to staff a newly established MASH tent, remaining on scene through the afternoon. Ultimately, they did not treat anyone, because at this point, all surviving patients had been transported.

Life Member Diane Pitts came to the Rescue Squad after being released from her federal job and arranging childcare. That evening she was taken to the Pentagon to relieve the Air 1 staffing. Throughout the night she filled SCBA bottles and provided lighting. Another volunteer, Jenny Farr, although untrained in air truck operations, came along and assisted. Diane stayed there for six days supporting decontamination and relief operations.

Back at the station, Deputy Chief Jim Master stepped in to serve as the station commander. Supported by Assistant Chief Ken Yagze and Secretary Ken Holden, leadership managed crew accountability as dozens of volunteers arrived eager to assist. To keep the crews sustained, Life Member John McDonough coordinated food donations from the local supermarket that he managed. There were no further major calls for the Rescue Squad during this period.

Looking back on the response, Chief Master noted one of the most vital personal lessons from that chaotic day: always reassure your family. After receiving calls from family members of several volunteers worried for their safety, he was glad to report that they were safe and supported by a dedicated community. That message is as true today as it was 25 years ago. We need to keep in touch, support each other, and focus on the positive mission that has united BCCRS members and the broader fire/rescue community throughout our history.