

County Commission Update: Remembering 9/11

By Wade Mathews, Public Information Officer

Most of us living now will remember September 11th, 2001 as our country's most tragic day. Nearly 3,000 lives were lost on that day when terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania field. The tenth anniversary of those horrific events is almost upon us. Our country hasn't seen a day like 9/11 since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, "a date that will live in infamy," said President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

We have never forgotten that day that triggered the United States' entry into World War II. Some people of our older generation still remember where they were and what they were doing when they first heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor. I hope we will also never forget 9/11, which launched us into the continuing war on terror.

I'm sure you remember where you were when you first heard of the attacks on the Twin Towers. The Tooele County Commissioners took a moment to share their thoughts about 9/11. Here is what Commissioner Colleen Johnson wrote.

"I was at home listening to roofers banging on my roof. The phone rang and Bob told me to turn the TV on. Just as I did the second plane hit the twin towers of the World Trade Center. All I could do was stare at the TV in disbelief, things like this don't happen in America! My thoughts immediately went to my family, and I said a silent prayer of thanks that they were safe, and then a prayer for all those being affected by this horrible event. Then came the reports of a plane hitting the Pentagon and a plane crashing in Pennsylvania.

"As I was thinking about this I realized that there are children that will be learning this in their history classes as people of my generation learned of Pearl Harbor, and trying to imagine how such an event could happen. I don't think there are words to describe the gamut of feelings and emotions that people went through that day and the days to follow.

"Never, Never, Never forget or let your families forget what this great nation stands for. We were founded on freedom and today it is just as important as it was then. As horrible and terrifying as the 9-11 attacks were it brought our country and communities together as never before. I was so proud of the way our nation pulled together and stood up for what we believe in. We had a greater appreciation for just how blessed and lucky we are and how good we have it—something that we should never ever take for granted."

Commissioner Bruce Clegg said this about that fateful day, "We were helping a re-enactment of a wagon train of Mormon settlers traveling from Spanish Fork to San Bernardino, California. We

were on the desert in Juab County and had just hooked up the teams to the wagons when we got the message about the World Trade Center. People were wondering, 'is this the end of the world' since America had never been attacked this way before. That's what was going through people's minds. No matter how you thought about it, it was a serious event, a disconcerting event.

"The decision was made to stay on schedule with the wagon train until we got more information. The attacks never impeded our progress but we kept getting more details about the event as we rolled along. We finished our leg of the journey at the Nevada border.

"I think it's really important that we keep these events on our minds and express our feelings to people who might not remember it, the younger generations, and let them know what we went through at that time, what it was like. We want them to stay vigilant and reduce or eliminate the vulnerabilities that existed then so we don't have to experience that again."

Commissioner Hurst was unavailable for this article.

I also remember exactly what I was doing on 9/11 when I first heard of the attacks. It was the day before Tooele County's annual Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program exercise. Other Public Affairs Officers and I were going to be meeting with members of the media to issue them credentials for observing the emergency drill the following day.

I was home getting ready for work when I got a phone call from a photographer at Channel 4 News. He asked me if we were still going to be conducting our exercise. When I replied "yes" and asked him "why wouldn't we?" he excitedly told me about the first plane crash into the World Trade Center. I told him I'd have to get back with him about the exercise. After turning on my TV I watched in utter disbelief as the second plane flew into one of the Twin Towers. I couldn't believe it was really happening.

In remembrance of the tragic events on 9/11, and especially all those who lost their lives as a result of the terrorist attacks, Tooele County Emergency Management will activate the sirens, part of our outdoor warning system, on Sunday morning, September 11th. We plan to activate the sirens at about 9:59 a.m., the time the first World Trade Center tower collapsed. Please don't be alarmed when you hear the sirens' "wail" tone, followed by the message "Join Tooele County in remembering the heroes and victims of the 9/11 tragedy."

Please take a moment on the upcoming September 10th to reflect on how 9/11 changed you, your family, and your country. Always remember that tragic day, and as a people remain vigilant against the evils of the world and anyone, foreign or domestic, that will attempt to take away the freedoms and prosperity that are only available in this great country, the United States of America.