



PASS Remembers 9/11

On a beautiful late summer morning 20 years ago, the men and women of PASS, the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO, were on the job as usual, working for the American public. What transpired that day changed our nation and the aviation industry forever.

In the days, weeks and months following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the 11,000 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Defense (DoD) employees represented by PASS went above and beyond their usual selfless dedication to their work. They helped safely clear the skies that day, as over 4,000 planes were grounded and those in the air directed to the closest airport. "This was an amazing feat, that there were no accidents," recalled one PASS member who was working at the Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center at the time, as a computer specialist in automation.

"In what was an unprecedented mobilization effort, PASS members stepped up to support the defense of their country and safety of the National Airspace System," said National President Mike Perrone. "They were prepared that day and every day to do their jobs and to respond to any national emergency."

PASS members staffed phones to address pilot, mechanic and public concerns and monitored airports and facilities 24 hours a day, coordinating mandates from the White House, Department of Transportation and the FAA. Another PASS member at the Boston Center worked in communications security and was tasked with securing communications and data records. He also accompanied armed emergency responders as they searched the grounds of the FAA facility.

At the request of DoD, PASS-represented employees staffed long-range radars throughout the country and worked with the Air Force to provide additional radar surveillance, data and voice communication capability to the military.

Our aviation safety inspectors worked with the FBI to review procedures for how foreign nationals gain access to U.S. aircraft, receive pilot training and perform maintenance on U.S. aircraft. Records examiners performed quick and extensive reviews of pilot certificates, resulting in the identification of the terrorists responsible for the attacks. One aviation safety inspector, new to the FAA's Las Vegas Flight Standards District Office at the time, recalled the number of charter flights stranded at the Grand Canyon and the pleas for help to get the tourists returned safely amid the chaos. "I won't forget the somber, hectic and saddening day when so many lives were lost, and I remember how efficiently and professionally our FAA family worked that day and the coming days," he said.

That sentiment was echoed by the incoming PASS National President, Dave Spero, who was at work in Oklahoma on 9/11. "I witnessed the remarkable professionalism of my co-workers and air traffic controllers to secure facilities and bring aircraft in safely," he said.



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Many PASS members served in the national guard at the time or joined the military as a result of the attacks. One member, now working as an FAA airway transportation systems specialist in Tennessee, was in the New York National Guard at the time. Within an hour of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center, his unit was called up and he was racing to Manhattan. The next day, they were patrolling the subway tunnels that led to the World Trade Center station. “We walked all that first day looking for survivors but most of the time, we found no one alive.” He later was among the National Guard members deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.

“I was at the FAA’s William J. Hughes Technical Center in Atlantic City, representing PASS in a meeting with agency management that day, when a knock on the door alerted us to what was going on,” said President Perrone. “We gathered, stunned, around the television and checked in with our families and coworkers.”

As we pause to remember the 3,000 people killed, and more than 6,000 injured that day, PASS vows to their families to never forget the sacrifices made that day and to honor those who lost their lives. PASS members commitment to maintaining the largest, safest and most complex air traffic control system in the world was only deepened that horrible day.