

# A nation on red alert

## Caltech, JPL, airports close in wake of terrorist attacks

By Jaymee Cuti and Anne Louise Bannon

The streets of Old Pasadena — usually bustling with business and frivolous shopping excursions — were empty Tuesday as people coped with the possibility that war is imminent. Glued to their televisions, locals were too shocked to mourn as they consider Pasadena's risk for further terrorism.

The New York skyline was forever changed after two hijacked planes, bound for Los Angeles, kamikazed into the World Trade Center before 9 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. Before both towers gave way to fire and gravity, a third hijacked plane dove into the Pentagon.

Although the attack was thousands of miles away, the city of Pasadena — like most cities in the country — was on tactical alert. The city's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) was not open, but if a disaster or emergency occurred, the police chief, fire chief or city manager were prepared to open the center or dispatch local police officers to Los Angeles.

"Our training is being practiced in a very real fashion. Pasadena is not unlike any major city in a major metropolitan area because we are so close to Los Angeles," said Ann Erdman, Pasadena's public information officer.

Los Angeles County Supervisors Michael Antonovich and Zev Yaroslavsky were in Washington D.C. on Pennsylvania Avenue, two blocks from the White House Tuesday, meeting with members of Congress to discuss county issues with Jim Ziglar, the new commissioner for the Immigration Nationalization Services. Business was canceled at 10 a.m. EST when staff learned of the terrorist attack at the World Trade Center.

At 11 a.m., they were told the Pentagon was hit, and Antonovich and others traveled to the roof to watch the nation's military headquarters burn.

"I didn't see the plane, but I saw black smoke and a large part of the Pentagon had been hit," said Antonovich Tuesday in an interview from his hotel room. "All meetings are canceled because all roads into Washington are closed. The streets are basically a ghost town."

"It's important that the nation unite behind our president and we find who is responsible for this cowardly act and we send a message to the world that democracy and freedom cannot be paralyzed by terrorists," said Antonovich. He plans to return to Los Angeles today, Thursday.

Pasadena police Cmdr. Mary Schander, the public information officer for the Pasadena Police Department, confirmed that the department was in tactical alert.

"We have a full compliment of police personnel available," said Schander. "We have a specific plan and sufficient personnel should an emergency arrive."

"We're a little schizophrenic," Victoria Wright, spokesperson for St. Luke's Hospital, said on the day of the bombing.

On one hand, people at the hospital reacted very professionally, she said, following hospital procedure for disaster situations. But on the human level, people were stunned.

"As things begin to sink in, everybody's weepy at the loss," Wright said.

Both St. Luke's and Huntington Memorial hospitals were on high alert, treating the situation as if the disaster had happened right here at home, not some 3,000 miles away.

Huntington, in particular, was in a state of high readiness as one of 13 trauma centers in Los Angeles County and the only one in the San Gabriel Valley.

"I just got my clipboard," said Connie Matthews, spokesperson for Huntington Hospital. She said that while all off-duty personnel had not been called in, all other procedures were in place during the emergency, including administrative personnel, who handle their assignments from special clipboards that are carried in such events.

Pasadena City College and Pasadena Unified School District was open for business as usual, and staff psychologists were prepared to console alarmed students and faculty. La Canada-Flintridge Unified School District was closed because of their proximity to Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Jill Perry, spokesperson for Caltech, said that although school is not in session for the fall, officials closed the campus. "Right now, there's a heightened concern nationally concerning security and the administration made the decision to close Caltech. I don't think Caltech is a target for anyone, but we decided to close just to be safe."

Non-essential employees at the Los Angeles Times were sent home, officials there said. Larry Wilson, editor of the Pasadena Star-News, said the Daily News, and various other mid-sized newspapers in Southern California that are owned by Los Angeles News Inc., were in operation, including the Ontario-based Daily Bulletin. Ontario International Airport served as a diversionary airport to land any planes that were still in the air after the airports were closed Tuesday. "The Daily News is out in the suburbs. They're at no more risk than we are," said Wilson.

Transportation systems operated under tight security. Sharon Gavin, a spokesperson for Metrolink, said that all Metrolink traffic continued, and Metrolink ran four additional rails to Lancaster, San Bernardino, Oceanside and Riverside in case people wanted to be with their families.

Marc Littman, a Metropolitan Transportation Authority spokesperson said they were operating on Code One Alert. The MTA activated a mobile

emergency command center, should anything happen to the Gateway One headquarters, located next to Union Station in Downtown Los Angeles. It was also prepared to lend buses to law enforcement if people in Los Angeles needed to be evacuated.

Victor J. Gill, spokesperson at the Burbank Airport, emphasized how quiet everything was with the airport shut down.

"People very quickly assimilated the fact that there was no travel today," Gill said. "People were astounded and amazed, but understanding."

The EOC in Los Angeles was active and Los Angeles County was in full alert, said Judy Hammond, spokesperson for Los Angeles County. Emergency staffs from hospitals, law enforcement public works and various other emergency operations offices came together to prepare for possible further terrorism. "We've been told to be ready to report at any time," she said.

While rampant fear did not seem to be apparent, the closures of Caltech and JPL underscored the concerns for public safety. Across the Southland, other defense industry companies also shut down, including Aerospace Corp., an El Segundo company that works closely with the U.S. Air Force. TRW, another prominent defense contractor, remained open. A spokesperson there said that the security was heightened, but did not disclose details.

People in Pasadena seemed to want to take action of any sort. In fact, Lisa Derderian, of the San Gabriel Chapter of the American Red Cross, said that offers to donate blood and generally help out have been coming in since early morning.

"We have literally had hundreds of calls," Derderian said.

She added that a couple of Caltech and JPL employees had come in, seeing as though they couldn't work. They were assigned to an impromptu phone bank that was set up to handle the avalanche of calls.

Derderian emphasized that the need for blood will be ongoing, as burn injuries - the most common in the attack - require ongoing transfusions.

Persons wishing to donate can call (626) 395-7188.

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