

# CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT Distribution

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## NEVER AT A LOSS, ALWAYS AT THE READY

By C. David Kelly

*Associate Editor AED member companies respond immediately to  
the terrorist attacks  
on New York City and Washington, D.C.*

Dennis Romanson, like all Americans, will never forget the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. He watched along with the rest of the United States as terrorists unleashed their fury on New York City, Washington, D.C., and the American way of life. He witnessed the worst in human behavior.

He also saw an American spirit awakened that day, an attitude this country hasn't experienced perhaps since Pearl Harbor in 1941. He saw the United States respond in a way that demonstrated the best in human behavior.

Romanson is general sales manager of Caterpillar dealer H.O. Penn Machinery Co. in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. He and many of his construction equipment brothers and sisters sprang immediately into action to assist in the massive rescue and recovery efforts at New York's World Trade Center. Dealers in the District of Columbia area were no different, rushing equipment, manpower and supplies to the Pentagon, which, like the World Trade Center, was hit by a hijacked U.S. airliner.

Within hours of the attack, equipment dealers and manufacturers had excavators, trucks, wheel loaders and other equipment en route to the devastated areas of New York City and Washington, D.C. Caterpillar Inc. worked closely with Romanson and other dealers in its Northeastern distribution network to provide vitally needed machines, generator sets, light towers, grapples and other attachments for the rescue and cleanup operations. Several Cat-supplied excavators were in action working at ground zero near the World Trade Center site the night of the disaster.

"We literally had people on site from Day One," says Romanson, who is also an AED director and president of the Metropolitan New York Equipment Distributors Association. "Knowing that the rescue effort would go on all night, our engine people were involved with the New York Police Department right off the bat to supply them with light towers.

"We've had guys off and on site. We have our own command center a few blocks away servicing equipment around the clock, manning generators to supply power."

H.O. Penn also donated boots, gloves and other clothing to rescue workers, as well as \$100,000 to the United Way's September 11 Fund.

Barry Heffernan, sales manager for Hoffman Equipment in Piscataway, N.J., led a convoy of equipment to lower Manhattan. Most of the machines came from Hoffman's rental fleet, including equipment donated by Terex Corp. and JCB Inc. Heffernan referred to the action of Hoffman Equipment, Terex and JCB as "a response from the heart."

"If you wait for someone to ask you to do it, your heart's not in the right place," he says.

The day of the attack, JCB contacted Hoffman Equipment to make arrangements for the transfer of equipment to the Brooklyn Army Terminal of the Office of Emergency Management. The equipment--backhoe loaders and telescopic handlers--is part of the pool of equipment being used in recovery and cleanup efforts.

In the days immediately after the attack, gridlock made transporting equipment to lower Manhattan difficult. The day of the attack, H.O. Penn took equipment out of its rental store in Connecticut and had a state police escort the machinery to the rescue site.

Caterpillar donated specialized high-reach excavators. Operators traveled overnight from Caterpillar's test site in Illinois and arrived in New York City on Sept. 12. The company also is matching employee donations of up to \$1,000 to the United Way, Salvation Army and Red Cross.

Hoffman Equipment's also was impressed with the response of the equipment industry.

"I sent out a call to truckers, and 25 independent truckers showed up with lowboys," he says. "I got phone calls from contractors wanting to offer their equipment. We've got some landscaping customers offering equipment operators. We also responded with our service trucks and dealership staff."

"There are literally thousands of firms contributing to the rescue and recovery effort," adds Romanson. "Ours is just a small part of that contribution."

Romanson was personally touched by the disaster. Six members of his church are missing and presumed dead. The husband of one of his wife's friends is presumed dead. A girl from his daughter's school lost both her parents.

"It's just stomach-turning," he says. "So many people are affected. No one has seen anything on this scale before. It's such a sad state."

The dealerships Romanson and Heffernan represent are just two of the many AED members who responded to this national disaster. Everyone who donated his or her time, money and equipment personified the true spirit of America.

They demonstrated what is good about America.