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AFTER THE RAGE By Stephanie Johnston

Manager Editor A united construction equipment industry rallies to supply the tools of recovery.

Like all Americans, Barry Heffernan will never forget where he was or what he was doing on Sept. 11 when he heard the news that changed the United States forever.

The 10-year employee of Daewoo dealership Hoffman Equipment Inc. in Piscataway, N.J., was working on his second cup of coffee, idly scanning the shop floor from his desk as he made routine phone calls. He'd already been in the office for an hour or so when he heard someone yell something about a plane hitting the World Trade Center. The idea was absurd, but something in the employee's tone of voice prompted Heffernan to go to the dealership's television in the cafeteria.

There, along with several service technicians who'd just sat down for their 8:50 a.m. break, Heffernan watched a fully fueled commercial airliner slam into the second of the two towers of the World Trade Center.

Later that day and half a continent away, Patric Runnion, president of lift-equipment dealership Runnion Equipment Co. in Lyons, Ill., was struggling to make sense of the day's events when he got a call from one of his long-time customers.

Musco Mobile Lighting in Iowa, provider of sophisticated lighting systems for professional sporting events, had been called to Arlington, Va., just outside Washington, D.C., where another fully fueled commercial airliner had slammed into the west side of the Pentagon about 40 minutes after the attacks in New York City. As night fell, rescue workers realized they wouldn't have enough cranes for the rescue and recovery effort.

Musco wanted to know if Runnion would donate a boom truck to hold its lighting equipment in place 100 feet above the rescue site.

His answer, of course, was yes.

Heffernan and Runnion are just two of the hundreds--perhaps thousands--of employees and principals of construction equipment dealerships, manufacturing companies and customers who responded immediately and in whatever way they could to the tragedy of Sept. 11. Competitors and customers, dealers and vendors--all worked together in an unprecedented demonstration of unity to alleviate the suffering that followed the attacks. Customers called their dealers, dealers called their customers, dealers called other dealers, dealers called their vendors, and manufacturers called their dealers.

In the end, they contributed more equipment than was needed. Some of it was never used and is back in dealership yards and rental fleets. Some of it is being repaired after sustaining quite a beating. Some will be sold and rented to the four contractors and countless subcontractors that are cleaning up the mess (see sidebar).

"Will there be equipment sold?" Joseph Watters, president of Hoffman Equipment, asks rhetorically. "Probably. But that's not our goal. It's a sad way to gain business."

Indeed, the equipment industry's response to the events on Sept. 11 was not about business. It was about common sense and compassion.

Heffernan, who is Hoffman's vice president of rental and sales, and COO Timothy Watters worked frantically with other employees to prepare equipment for shipment to the disaster site. Excavator buckets were changed from clamshell to grapple, units were fueled, welding machines were fired up, calls went out for low-bed trailers, calls went out to other dealers and police escorts were arranged.

At 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 11, a caravan of more than 20 pieces of equipment and attachments--excavators, cranes, wheel loaders, grapples, shears and hammers--operators and technicians from other dealerships as well as Hoffman pulled out of the dealership's yard for a WHAT-hour journey.

No one had asked for the equipment. The dealership had no idea if it would even be used.

"We could see the flames," says Heffernan of the convoy's approach to the disaster site. The process of getting the equipment into New York was interminable. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which issues the permits required to take trucks and heavy equipment over the Brooklyn Bridge into lower Manhattan, had been on the 106th floor of in the north tower of the World Trade Center. Each piece of equipment was taken over the bridge separately from the staging area in Brooklyn because much of it exceeded weight limitations. A bomb scare at the Empire State Building on Sept. 12 further delayed the process.

Heffernan spent the nights of Sept. 11 and 12 in his car.

Meanwhile, at Albany Ladder Co. in New York's capitol, operations director Mike Colligan was organizing shipments of free hard hats and face masks to the Empire State Regional Council of Carpenters and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 137. Having been a firefighter for 23 years, Colligan knew many members of the regional Urban Search and Rescue team in Albany that was working with the state Office of Fire Prevention and Control to deliver supplies to New York City firefighters.

His dealership helped feed rescue workers as well. Albany Ladder donated an 8,000-pound forklift to the American Red Cross, which had set up a field kitchen and supply center at the intersection of Spring and Washington streets in lower Manhattan, just blocks from the World Trade Center.

A COORDINATED RESPONSE: MANUFACTURERS AND DEALERS

Dozens of equipment manufacturing companies and their dealers worked together to get equipment to New York City and the nation's capitol.

Volvo Construction Equipment North American Inc. and Caterpillar Inc. are just two.

Brook Tyler III, president of the East Longmeadow, Mass.-based Volvo dealership Tyler Equipment Corp., was in a budget and forecast meeting when he and his top managers heard what had had happened in New York City. They knew there was going to be a great need for equipment, but had no idea how to go about approaching anybody.

Then they received an e-mail from Volvo construction equipment headquarters in Asheville, N.C., asking all dealers for a list of their available equipment. The company's goal was to submit a list of available equipment to New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's office.

The city opted for the five, 40-ton Volvo articulated haulers that Tyler Equipment had available. The dealership transported the trucks at its own expense, one a day, with the first one arriving Sept. 13. Just as Hoffman Equipment experienced, getting the equipment to the site was easier said than done.

They were stopped by one official for not having paid the \$25 fee for some kind of permit. Another driver was stopped on a weight technicality. By New York standards the equipment was slightly heavy on one axle, by Connecticut and Massachusetts standards it was fine. But when the highway official discovered the truck was bound for the clean-up site, he let it pass. "Go on and get the hell out of here," he said.

"A lot of dealers geared up and then were denied access," Tyler says. "There was no way to get oversized equipment in there unless you had the blessings of the people in control who kind of shepherded you into the thing."

Tyler Equipment's trucks were needed at Fresh Kills Landfill in Staten Island, owned by the city of New York and operated by the Department of Sanitation. It's the only landfill so far that is receiving debris from the disaster site. Because it comes from a crime scene, the debris is sifted carefully for evidence before being shipped to various locations for recycling.

Tyler found his visit to the landfill "very disturbing."

"You're looking at all this stuff, knowing what it had once been--and yet, as you looked, you couldn't begin to tell what anything was," he says. "You could see a wheel here or figure out that that thing all twisted over there might have been a ladder.

"It was confirmation--like, yes, this is real. What I saw on TV really did happen." I went away not feeling real good."

Volvo dealership Malvese Equipment Co. Inc. in Hicksville, N.Y., near Long Island, was the Volvo dealership nearest Ground Zero. President Albert Cooley made initial contacts with the city.

POWERING UP PART OF A CITY

The 16-acre World Trade Center campus, the center of the nation's economic hub near Wall Street, comprised seven buildings. Most were pretty much destroyed on Sept. 11.

One of these buildings was the 47-story 7 World Trade Center, home to the Con Edison substation that powered most of lower Manhattan. (The building was evacuated successfully with no fatalities.) While the substation had emergency generators that supplied power to critical operations immediately following the attacks, the city's financial district was overwhelmed with the need for additional power because operations that were running on their emergency generators needed backup for those generators.

That's where Caterpillar Inc. dealership H.O. Penn Machinery Co. Inc. in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., came in.

In addition to sending portable generator sets to Con Edison, the dealership's Power Systems Division sent many more to companies that already had generators. To make sure there would be enough gensets, H.O. Penn asked for additional equipment from other Cat dealers throughout the Northeast and stored some of it in Poughkeepsie. Caterpillar sent its entire supply of just-completed 2-megawatt gensets.

H.O. Penn's technicians set up the generator sets, wired them to transformers, laid cable to the buildings and stayed with them around the clock once they were up and running. They also helped customers on site and employees at Con Edison's emergency center maintain their gensets. Technicians from Cat dealers Foley Inc. of Piscataway, N.J., and Southworth-Milton Inc. in Milford, Mass., as well as employees of Caterpillar, worked alongside them.

"We literally had people on site from day one," says Jim Delaney, vice president of H.O. Penn's Power Systems Division. "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."

The dealership worked from a "command center" it set up in a passageway next to 180 Maiden Lane on Manhattan's lower East Side. Even though the World Trade Center is on the West Side and most of the generators were on the East Side, lower Manhattan is small enough that support personnel could get around to the various power sites quickly.

On Sept. 17, less than a week after the attacks and thanks in large part to the power supplied by H.O. Penn, Wall Street went back to work. All of the stock exchanges near the World Trade Center opened on time. Forty of the 68 emergency power modules that were running belonged to H.O. Penn; at 2,000 kilowatts they were the largest on the job. H.O. Penn was supplying nearly 60 megawatts of power and more than 100,000 feet of cable and transformers spread throughout the streets of lower Manhattan.

In the meantime, Con Edison had begun laying new cable and was starting to bring in power from another one of its substations. Slowly but surely, H.O. Penn's generators were taken off line. Soon, only a few of the dealership's generators were running.

And lower Manhattan was on its road to recovery.