

The show must go on

Where were you when America was attacked on September 11, 2001? Most of you were probably well into starting your busy day, taking care of your commercial and residential accounts. Chances are that once you found out about the planes crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, you went on to do more important things, like calling loved ones to make sure they were unharmed. Some of you may have even gone home to hug your children. I know I did.

You'll never forget where you were when the news hit, though.

"I was at a meeting when it happened," says Bruce Allentuck, president of Allentuck Landscaping, Gaithersburg, MD. "Our production staff kept working, but half our office staff went home. The next day we received no calls whatsoever, and we didn't call anyone."

"We had crews down to the general area around the Pentagon, so we of course pulled them right back out of there," he adds.

There were some who were even closer to the disaster, literally a couple miles away. Matt Smoot, project director for the The Brickman Group, Alexandria, MD, was on the 13th floor of his office building watching the disaster in New York unfold on television with fellow employees.

"My boss heard a plane and said, 'Oh, that sounds awful loud,'" Smoot says. "I ran to the other side of the building, thinking nothing was going to happen, and that's when I saw the plane. It was barreling toward the ground, and then I saw a fireball."

Smoot then says that a couple of F-16 fighter jets flew over their building, making a "huge noise." Every-

one started making phone calls to find out what happened, some to crews who were out working. The property yard, Smoot said, is only one-quarter of a mile from the Pentagon.

"They had all those streets closed," Smoot says. "We told our crews to stay and wait to see what happened. It turns out we had to leave everything, including equipment and trucks, right where it was."

What happened the next day was probably what happened in landscape, lawn and grounds crews across the country. The crews simply picked up their equipment and proceeded as normal to finish their jobs. It's not surprising, given that people in the Green Industry are some of the hardest working around. It would have been nice to take a week off like the NFL players did, stating "our hearts just wouldn't be in the game," but let's face it, the show must go on, and that means taking care of our customers as well as we can.

As Smoot says of his employees, "Everyone seemed to be intrinsically motivated, and nobody appeared to be nervous or scared about going to work. Everyone seemed to gain a greater appreciation of our country, and how lucky we are to work every day."

A commercial customer recently called Smoot to request changing his flower colors to red, white and blue. If that doesn't make you feel proud to work, nothing will.

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