

I serve in the Navy as a Congressional Liaison Officer, working with the House and Senate Appropriations Defense Sub-Committees on matters concerning the Navy budget. In particular, I am responsible for the ship construction, surface warfare, and expeditionary warfare accounts.

I was in our office on the fourth floor of the new wedge, D-ring. I walked about six feet away from our office window that faced the E-ring, my back toward the window, watching on TV the scenes out of New York City with about a half dozen other co-workers when the plane crashed into Pentagon.

The fireball filled the window behind me, throwing co-workers and myself toward the floor. Getting up off floor, I helped a co-worker toward the main corridor, and then doubled back to the E-ring in search of my Boss. There I joined three other Officers and one Second Class Petty Officer, yelling directions for people exiting the area and looking for anyone left behind. The thickening smoke reduced visibility to practically arms length in the direction of the fifth corridor and the buckled floor foretold of a rupture that would consume that portion of the E-ring. Continually forced back by the smoke, and having failed in my attempt to access the Admiral's office, we were met by fully dressed-out firefighters arriving via the emergency stairwell that somehow survived completely intact. (The time we were there before they arrived is still unclear to me, but probably around 15-20 minutes.) I gave them a turnover of what we had seen, where we thought the main fire and damage was located, and asked for their help in accessing and searching the Admiral's office for survivors (We were to find out hours later that everyone had already safely evacuated the space). We exited the E-ring via the same stairwell and I made my way to the triage area.

In between the false alarms to evacuate the area because of reports other inbound airliners, I joined hundreds of other volunteers in the triage area looking to do anything that might assist those in need. There were actually relatively few injuries coming to this area and so I instead joined the call for stretcher-bearers to form on the highway, facing the damaged side of the building. It was then that I saw the E-ring collapse before my eyes. Hours passed with repeated calls for forming up, and then standing down, the stretcher-bearers as it became more obvious that there would be few injured survivors to pull from the wreckage.

At this point I, and a friend from my previous job, left our stretcher and joined approximately fifty other volunteers for morgue duty inside the Pentagon, at ground zero. Broken into teams of eight to ten people, we received preliminary instructions on our upcoming tasking of assisting with the retrieval of remains, and waited for the order to proceed. Hours passed and they fed us Army rations on the grass. The order never came. Due to the intense heat, the FBI's labeling of the site as a crime scene, and with word that a specialty team was being brought in, our teams were secured around 1900.

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