

Pentagon & World Trade Center Attacked While Surface Finishers Met in Washington

AESF members were gathered in our nation's capitol on September 11, 2001, when terrorists hijacked and used our own commercial airliners to attack and kill Americans in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania. Many of them witnessed the destruction in Washington first-hand.

Our deepest sympathies go out to the families and friends of those who were killed or injured in this horrific terrorist attack.

We appreciate the messages of condolences, concerns and encouragement that have been received at AESF Headquarters from Society members and surface finishing organizations throughout the world. What follows are comments received from Jaime Maliszewski of the Milwaukee Branch who saw the plane hit the Pentagon:

I was in Washington, DC, Tuesday (Sept. 11), along with many fellow platers, to visit Wisconsin's legislators on behalf of the electroplating industry of Milwaukee. Our plane was descending to Reagan airport when I noticed a plane flying below, and to the left of our plane. I thought, "why is he so low, going so fast, and headed to the same runway we are?" I watched as the plane began to cut in front of our plane (maybe two miles ahead) flying just above the trees. Then the plane disappeared behind a building and a huge fireball erupted that was three times the height of the Washington Monument. I told my friend, Bruce Laken (Finishing and Plating), that I just saw a plane crash. He didn't believe me. So I told him, "Really, it crashed. We're not going to land at Reagan." Just then our pilot powered up, started climbing, and turned a high bank away from the airport. He told us that Reagan airport was closed, therefore we would be sent to Dulles airport, were we would get ground transport, and he would give us more information as it became available. We felt it was terrible that the people on that plane died (we did not know anything of the hijackings or attacks on the World Trade Center at this time). Just as we were landing at Dulles, two EMTs who were flying with us stated that the crash must be bad since they were being paged to assist, and they were stationed an hour from the crash. After landing at Dulles, we spent about a half an hour on the runway, and were not permitted to use our cell phones. When we were finally told we would unload, an EMT's pager stated that the crash was a hijacked plane. Our plane finally rolled to a stop and I tried to use my cell phone, but all circuits were busy. It would take another half an hour before I could call my wife, an hour before I could reach my parents, who were now worried sick and stuck in traffic at Reagan, and another 15 minutes to contact my office. Shortly after we reached the gate, the pilot, who while in the air and waiting on the ground gave us updates in a firm voice, keeping every one calm and unaware of the true tragedies (this man and his crew were heroes), came out of the cockpit crying and apologizing for his condition. With a severely choked-up voice, he told us for the first time of the full scale of the tragedies in New York and Washington. The whole plane was shocked. It was silent for a moment, and then the cell phones went wild with people trying to call loved ones.



These photos were taken by AESF Board member Joseph Leonhardt, CEF, who took part in the Surface Finishing Legislative Conference. The top photo shows the Capitol Building in the distance and the traffic gridlock caused by the attack on the Pentagon. The other shows a view of the White House following the attack. Leonhardt had to borrow a car to get back home to Cincinnati, OH.

I wrote this because I felt the need to write it down. I think it is helping me to talk about it. The sight of the plane crashing will never leave my memory. I hope that our government finds all of the cancer responsible for this terrible act of cowardice. For terrorists are cancer and, if you don't eliminate the whole cancer, it grows back. These people are not brilliant strategists who came up with some great plan. They are bottom feeders who played on our fears.

There were heroes in the fourth plane who attacked the attackers, saving our great country from a fourth disaster. There were a lot of people who lost their lives in this tragedy. We can't let them down. The spirit of America is unbelievable. Other countries look to us for leadership. Let's lead!

Prouder than ever to be an American.
Jaime J. Maliszewski
Reliable Plating Works, Inc.