



Scrap metal exec joins cleanup brigade

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By Joseph McCann

PHILADELPHIA – Craig Cinelli hadn't driven a truck or hauled a load of scrap metal in the past five years, but last week's terrorist attacks compelled the New Jersey scrap metal processor to action.

Cinelli, the 32-year-old vice president of family owned Cinelli Iron & Metal Co. in Hackensack, N.J., joined a long list of volunteers whose praises may never be sung but still did everything they could to help.

In a telephone interview, Cinelli said the only thing he wanted to do was help. "I can't enlist in the Army any more," he said, "but I knew that I had resources that other people didn't have. This was something that I just had to do."

Cinelli had telephoned the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government agencies in the days following the Sept. 11 tragedy, but wasn't getting anywhere. Cinelli volunteered his entire fleet of trucks for cleanup services. With each call, Cinelli was graciously thanked and placed on a waiting list with countless other offers.

Sunday morning, Cinelli decided he could wait no longer. In the early morning hours, unsure of the reception he would receive, he took a company truck and drove north to the epicenter of America's mourning.

Despite the previous reassurances from multiple federal and state agencies, Cinelli was immediately drafted into service when he arrived. "There was absolutely no wait," he said. "I was checked out and they sent me in. It was tremendous."

Cinelli was directed down emergency routes and slowly negotiated the streets in New York. When he entered a 25-block radius of the site, Cinelli was stopped at civilian, military, police and finally fire department barricades. When he finally reached the heart of the financial district, Cinelli found it hard to hold back the tears.

"There was an outpouring of people clapping and applauding the entire way," Cinelli said. "Every time we stopped, volunteers threw in water, first aid and supplies to us. It was tremendous. Everyone was helping."

Cinelli's truck was stationed next to World Trade Center building No. 7 and quickly loaded with a 30,000-pound I-beam excavated from the rubble. On his second trip, Cinelli once again was near the same building and this time loaded up 5,000 pounds of aluminum, light metals and rubble.

While there, he had the opportunity to view the devastation caused by late week's terrorist attack. "It was difficult to handle," Cinelli said. "There was a 30- to 40-foot fire truck crushed down to the tires. It was the most devastating thing I've ever seen."

Even though FEMA has not called Cinelli back or asked for his help, he already is planning a return trip and vows to mobilize his entire 12-truck fleet. "There's still a need for more trucks and torch-cutting equipment," Cinelli said. "There needs to be a coalition of trucks to help with the cleanup."