

Shock And Response

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April 19, 1995, 9:02 a.m. - 11:22 a.m.

Wednesday, April 19, 1995, began as an ordinary day in Oklahoma City. Central Oklahoma's changeable, often blustery, spring weather had given way to a mild morning with a clear sky and light east winds. The downtown streets were marked with banners announcing the Festival of the Arts, which was scheduled to open on April 25. Workers were erecting brightly colored tents and kiosks in the Festival Plaza west of the Myriad Gardens. At 6:30 a.m., over one thousand civic and community leaders gathered at the Myriad Convention Center for the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. They prayed for guidance and support for the community. The mood of the City's leaders was quietly optimistic. Oklahoma City, which had seen the boom of the early '80s dissolve with the drop in oil prices, was developing a sounder, broader economic base. Citizens, showing a renewed confidence in the future, had recently approved a five-year limited sales tax. The anticipated \$293 million in revenue was designated to build or expand cultural, recreational, and convention facilities.

The 275 firefighters of the Oklahoma City Fire Department's Red Shift came on duty at the Department's 33 fire stations at 7:00 a.m. The Central Fire Communications Center conducted standard audio and radio tests of all stations. Fire personnel began their morning routines. At the Central Fire Station, or Fire Station No. 1, a chiefs' meeting and training exercises for the four resident companies were scheduled for 9:00 a.m. The Emergency Medical Service Authority (EMSA) had 16 of its 35 ambulances on standby at points around the city. EMSA's Administrative Offices at NW 10 and Walker opened at 8:00 a.m. Five personnel were attending an advanced paramedic training class at the Administrative Office at 9:00 a.m.

At 7:00 a.m., patrol shifts were changed at the Police Department's Central Police Station, the four Briefing Stations and the Police Communications Center. At 8:00 a.m., detectives and administrative personnel assigned to day jobs reported for duty at the Central

Police Station bringing the police force to 542 on-duty personnel. Crews and field supervisors reported to the City's line departments at 7:00 a.m. Crews were assembled, the day's duties were assigned, and the trucks began to roll out of the yards. City administrative offices opened at 8:00 a.m.

The Prayer Breakfast ended at 8:00 a.m. As those attending dispersed, the Oklahoma Restaurant Association was preparing for the second day of its trade show at the Myriad. By 9:00 a.m., Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norick was at his business office at 5400 Grand Boulevard, about five miles northwest of downtown. City Manager Don Bown was attending an Oklahoma Municipal League meeting about two miles northeast of downtown. The two Assistant City Managers, Joe Van Bullard and Penny Barclay, were at City Hall preparing for a staff meeting.

The America's Kids Day Care Center in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and the YMCA's Child Development Center opened early to receive children whose parents worked in the Murrah Building and nearby offices. By 9:00 a.m., 21 children were in the Murrah Building day care center and 53 were at the YMCA Building. Workers in the Murrah Building's 16 federal offices and the Federal Employees Credit Union were going about their daily routines. Some workers were getting coffee in Raymond's Place, the fourth floor snack bar. People had come to the building to conduct business in the Social Security Administration offices on the first floor and in the Credit Union on the third floor. Others were present for meetings at various agencies.

At 9:02 a.m., the calm of an ordinary day was shattered by an explosion that rocked every downtown building. The Oklahoma Geological Survey Station in Norman, Oklahoma, about 16 miles south of downtown, recorded a large surface wave at 9:02:13 followed by a second wave at 9:02:23. The force of the explosion

shook the city and was felt and heard for a range of more than 50 miles. Most emergency workers thought a natural gas line had exploded or that an airplane had crashed into a downtown building. In the first moments, while it was clear there was a major disaster, no one had a concept of the size and extent of the damage which had occurred.

The explosion came from the detonation of a 4,800-pound ammonium nitrate fuel oil bomb carried in a truck that was parked at the north entrance of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The force of the explosion destroyed the Murrah Building, collapsing most of the north front into a pile of rubble. The explosion severely damaged the surrounding buildings, with the Water Resources Board Building, the Athenian Building, the YMCA Building, the Journal Record Building, the Regency Tower Apartments, and the nearby churches sustaining the worst of the damage. Windows were shattered in a ten block radius. The force and heat of the blast set fire to cars parked on the street and in the lot across from the building. The dust from the collapsing building and the smoke from the burning cars billowed into a tall, almost mushroom-shaped cloud that turned from white to black and quickly towered over the city. Debris rained down. Pieces of paper, blasted free from desks and file cabinets in the Murrah Building, were blown into the air and swirled about like snow in a blizzard.

The impact area was a scene of terror and chaos. Glass from thousands of shattered windows and debris from buildings and cars covered the streets and sidewalks. Dazed, shaken survivors came out of the



Smoke from approximately 40 car fires ignited by an explosion billows skyward, obscuring the view of the main target of the terrorist attack. A one-story addition to the Journal Record Building (left foreground) has suffered extensive damage. A brick office building (right) has also been heavily damaged.

buildings. Hundreds of people were bleeding from lacerations caused by flying glass. Many severely wounded were laying on the ground. Wounded and nonwounded people wandered about in shock, some with their clothes in shreds. Workers at the YMCA began carrying frightened, bleeding children into the street to be received by strangers who sought to comfort them. Soon, worried family and friends of those working in the area came to look for them. Frantic parents and grandparents arrived to plead for any information about the children who had been in the day care centers.

Fire, Police, Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and EMSA communications came alive with reports of the explosion. While most reported a blast in the downtown area, the force of the explosion was so great that EOC and Police Communications received reports of an explosion from points throughout the city. The explosion triggered thousands of security alarms. Many of the alarms automatically rang E-9-1-1 or the Fire Department. The Police Communications Center received its first report at 9:02:20. Fire Dispatch received fragmentary reports. The first Fire officer to reach the scene reported an explosion at the Water Resources Board. Police Communications received a report of a blast at the Federal Building and a request for as many EMSA units as possible.

All of the on-duty City, County, and State emergency forces in or near downtown self-dispatched to the smoke and noise. The responding emergency units relied on their training and discipline as they confronted a disaster far greater than anything for which they had trained. Until overall command could be established, the senior officers arriving at various points in the severely damaged area sized up the situation in front of them and assigned work to the responding units. Hundreds of downtown workers rushed to the site. Many entered the buildings to search for survivors. Some of those who survived the blast stayed in the damaged buildings to search for their co-workers. Medical workers from across the city came to help the wounded.

Station personnel at Fire Station No. 1, five blocks west of the Murrah Building, ran outside and saw the rising tower of smoke. The four resident companies left immediately, as did the senior station personnel and all of the chiefs attending a meeting at the station. The chiefs drove down NW 6th Street in order to keep NW 5th open for fire apparatus. Units responded from the Fire Stations north, south, and east of downtown. The fire companies followed standard procedures, which

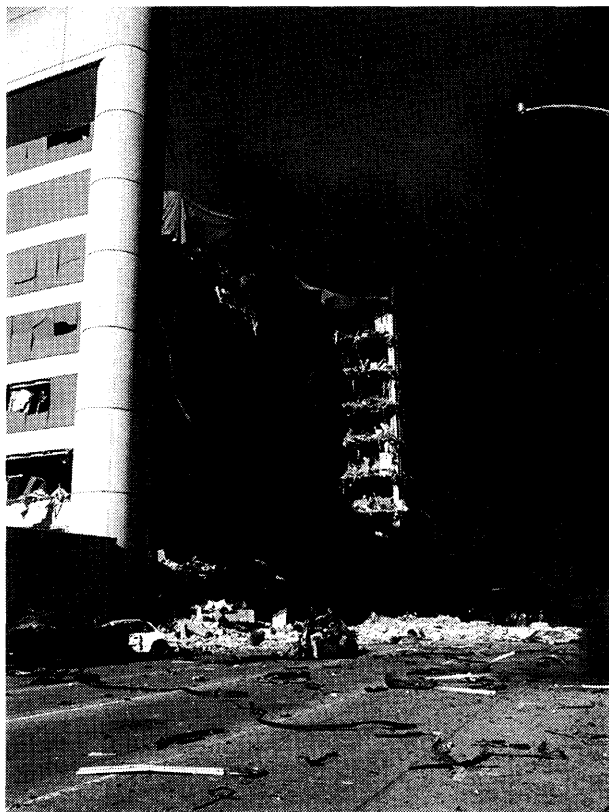


required them to take different routes toward the smoke. Some of the companies stopped on the west or Harvey Avenue side of the damage area and some drove to the east or Robinson Avenue side. A total of 11 pieces of equipment self-dispatched to the impact area. At 9:20 a.m., ten more units were dispatched to stage at Fire Station No. 1.

As they neared the area, the first fire companies encountered scores of walking wounded. Some companies assigned firefighters to leave the rigs and assist the injured. Other firefighters had to get out of their rigs and clear debris from the streets so that the equipment could be brought to the damaged buildings. The first companies approaching from the west heard the report that the Water Resources Board Building was damaged. As they came east on NW 5th, they saw that the Water Resources Board Building was heavily damaged. The west end of the Murrah Building did not appear damaged. The north face of the building was covered in smoke from the burning cars. The firefighters

focused their first rescue efforts at the Water Resources Board where they dug several injured people from the debris and carried them down the stairs. They entered the partially collapsed Athenian Building and used hand tools to dig through the rubble, extract a man, and carry him to safety. Units arriving from the east entered the YMCA Building to help evacuate the children and begin emergency medical treatment. Units conducted a primary search of the Journal Record Building and extricated a survivor from rubble outside that building.

Two companies were ordered to lay hose and attack the car fires before the flames could spread to the vulnerable Athenian and Journal Record buildings. When the smoke cleared, workers at the site saw that most of the north face of the Murrah Building was blown away. The building was a gaping, debris-strewn ruin. Most of the east one-third of the building was demolished all the way to the south wall. In its place was a huge, three-story-high pile of rubble formed from parts of the 6-inch concrete floor slabs and the remains of beams, walls, and furnishings. A two-story-high pile of concrete slabs and rubble extended across the north side and across NW 5th Street. There was a 30-foot-wide, 8-foot-deep crater on NW 5th Street where the bomb had detonated.



Crushed vehicles and debris from the Murrah Building litter the street. The north face of the Murrah Building, more visible from the east side of the structure, has collapsed into a massive pile of debris rising 30 feet from the ground.

Dust and smoke filled the remains of the Murrah Building making it hard to see. The structure groaned and creaked as pieces of debris and chunks of concrete were still falling from the edges of the shattered floors. The remains of concrete beams, walls, filing cabinets, furniture, ceiling tiles, and everything else that had been in the building were tumbled and heaped on the remaining floors. Thousands of strands of twisted rebar, plumbing pipes, air ducts, telephone lines, and electric and computer wires hung throughout the shattered structure, creating mazes. Some of the electric wires were still live. A piercing elevator alarm rang through the building. Pulverized concrete created thick dust that filled the air and settled over debris and bodies so that everything was gray. Rescuers made their way into the south and east areas of the first floor, which housed the Social Security Administration. Water from broken plumbing and cooling system lines covered the floor. Debris dammed water around some of the victims. Firefighters moved debris so that the water could drain out. Firefighters and volunteers worked in almost total darkness to rescue the injured.

Firefighters, police, medical workers, and volunteers searched for children in what was left of the day

care area. The blast collapsed a major portion of the second floor, dropping the slab and all it held onto the rubble below. Only the west rear floor of the day care area was left. Dolls, stuffed animals, and toys lay amid shattered glass and debris. Workers found still, dust-covered bodies in the rubble. Often it was difficult to tell whether the children were dead or alive. They picked them up, held them closely in their arms, and carried them from the building. Two police officers found two small children and carried them out through the parking garage. One police officer handed a child to a firefighter, the other handed a child to a deputy sheriff. Photographs of the child being handed from the police officer to the firefighter and of the firefighter cradling the child in his arms became icons of the Murrah rescue effort.

Ladder trucks could not be brought to the less-damaged south side of the building because of the raised plaza, and they could not be used on the windowless east and west ends. Two trucks were moved into position on the mangled, debris-covered north side. Ladders were raised to the upper floors. Survivors were brought down the ladders, including some who were trapped on narrow ledges. Firefighters used the ladders to access the upper floors and search for survivors. Another fire truck was positioned against the north side. It used its platform, or bucket, to enter the building on the third floor and conduct primary searches of the third, fourth, and fifth floors. The fire stairs on the south side were debris filled but intact. Firefighters and other rescuers used the stairs to gain access to the upper floors. Volunteers used the fence from the children's plaza playground as a ladder and assisted people calling for help from third floor windows.

Workers listened for calls for help and searched for signs of life. They saw the bodies of the dead, many of which were badly burned or mutilated. A few of the bodies were removed. However, except for those of the children, most were left where they were as workers concentrated on finding the living. Many of those who survived were trapped in the rubble of concrete slabs and furniture. Sometimes only a hand or a foot was visible. Workers carefully moved debris with their hands and with saws, pry bars, and "jaws-of-life" tools. As victims were extracted from the rubble, they were handed off to volunteers who formed a human chain to pass them out of the building. The human chain was also used to pass tools and equipment to the rescue workers.

The firefighters wore heavy boots, protective clothing, and helmets. Law enforcement personnel and vol-

unteers went into the building in everyday clothes with no protection for their heads. A number of rescue workers suffered minor injuries, including lacerations and sprains. Some firefighters took off their helmets and held them over the heads of medical workers caring for the wounded. One volunteer, a nurse who drove downtown to help in the rescue effort, died of injuries suffered when a heavy piece of concrete fell on her unprotected head.

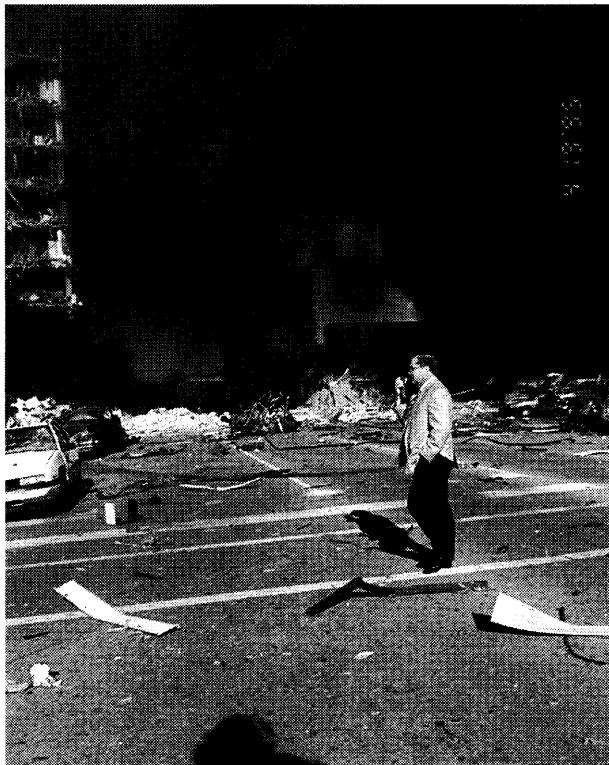
While public safety workers and volunteers concentrated on the immediate rescue effort, Fire Command worked to establish order and control. Oklahoma City's disaster protocols direct the Fire Department to take charge of rescue operations. The Department quickly implemented the Incident Command System it uses at every incident. The system provides that the on-duty shift commander takes charge of the incident. District Chief Bob McMahon was acting "A" Shift Commander, filling the place of an officer who had retired a few weeks earlier. Chief McMahon was one of the first chiefs to arrive at the site. At 9:04 a.m., he reported to Fire Dispatch that he was establishing command at NW 6th and Harvey. Because of this report, the Murrah bombing was officially known and recorded as the "6th Street Incident." Chief McMahon's priority was to gain control of the incident. He took command, operating out of his car, which was parked by the Water Resources Board Building.

The Incident Command System uses higher-ranking officers, including the Fire Chief, in liaison or advisory roles. Fire Chief Gary Marrs was en route to a downtown meeting when the blast occurred. He drove toward the smoke and arrived on NW 5th Street on the east side of the Murrah Building. Chief Marrs had monitored Fire Dispatch. He had a clear view of the damage to the Murrah and other buildings and realized that fire officers on the west did not know the full extent of the damage.

Chief Marrs reinforced implementation of the Incident Command System and assisted Chief McMahon in gaining control. He ordered a stop to radio traffic and told command to set up subcommands for each building. He reported to Dispatch that the front of the Federal Building was gone. At 9:20 a.m., Chief Marrs called a Fourth Alarm. This brought 10 additional fire companies to stage at Fire Station No. 1. Fire Maintenance readied surplus equipment for use at the stations whose equipment was downtown. Assistant Fire Chiefs Kenneth Bunch and Howard Adams reported to Chief McMahon and assisted him in setting up the

command structure for the incident. Adams ordered Fire's emergency command vehicle brought to the site.

The Incident Command System was developed from the knowledge that no one person can effectively manage all the facets of a complex, rapidly developing situation. The Incident Commander distributes responsibilities to an Operations Chief, who directs the on-site work; and Planning, Logistics, and Finance Chiefs, who coordinate the provision of resources. The Incident Commander is responsible for the work of the chiefs and for coordination with outside groups. One of Chief McMahon's first acts was to assign senior officers to each incident command function. He assigned Major Cornelius Young to Operations, Major Rick Henson to Planning, Captain Jim Scalf to Logistics and Business Manager Cathy Ginter to Finance. The Incident Command System provided a defined program for command, control, and coordination. Each officer was trained in the system and knew his/her assigned responsibilities. The Incident Command officers began bringing order to their functional areas.



OCFD Fire Chief Gary Marrs, from his vantage point east of the Murrah Building, provides information to the Incident Commander about the damage he is able to see that others may not be able to observe because of the smoke.



Black, acrid smoke continues to billow from the car fires. Even those vehicles not ignited by the heat of the explosion suffer extensive damage from the tremendous pressure exerted by the blast and from shrapnel moving at supersonic speeds.

Operations was in charge of the rescue work at the Murrah Building. Young needed to know what units were present and what units were staging at the Central Fire Station. An officer assigned to him contacted Dispatch and received a list of the units. He assisted Young in assigning resources to the work areas. Chief Conner, the first officer at the Murrah site, was in charge of forward operations. District Chief Mike Shannon served as Rescue Operations Chief in the interior of the Murrah Building. Shannon, a hazardous materials (Haz-Mat) officer, was one of the first firefighters to enter the building. He carried out his assigned duty, which was to survey the area and note the hazards. By 10:30 a.m., Chief Shannon surveyed the first four floors. Chief Gary Davis was in charge of Emergency Medical Services duties for Operations and coordinated triage and transport with EMSA.

The first emergency medical responders were three ambulances and a command vehicle from EMSA's headquarters at NW 10th and Walker. The ambulances carried additional paramedic-trained, administrative staff and five paramedics who had been attending a training session. They came south on Robinson. At NW 6th Street they met scores of wounded from the Journal Record Building and the YMCA. The ambulance companies, having no knowledge of the greater damage at the Murrah Building, stopped at NW 6th and set up a primary triage site.

EMSA Operations Officer Mike Murphy assigned personnel to serve as triage, treatment, and transport

officers. A supervisor established initial liaison with Fire Incident Command. Within minutes, emergency medical workers laid out supplies and began treating the wounded. The flying glass and the force of the explosion caused massive casualties. Hundreds of people required some kind of medical treatment. Injuries ranged from shock and/or mild lacerations to extensive lacerations, severe puncture wounds, and multiple injuries sustained by those thrown by the explosion or crushed by debris. Many survivors suffered facial lacerations and eye injuries. The first wounded were transported from triage at 9:27 a.m.

Ambulance companies transported a continuous stream of wounded until shortly after 10:00 a.m. A "load and go" policy was used for the most critical cases since advanced care was available at hospitals only minutes away from the site. Midwest City Ambulance Service, Mercy Hospital EMS, and Tinker AFB units responded under mutual aid agreements. They were joined by units from nearby cities and towns. Some ambulance crews had been transporting patients to or from Oklahoma City hospitals and came to the site. Others drove 50 miles or more to assist in the rescue work. A total of 65 ambulance crews served at the site in the first hour and a half.

Most of the survivors from the Murrah Building walked or were carried down the south stairs to the plaza and then on to Harvey. Fire and police vehicles blocked the street. EMSA and mutual aid ambulances coming from the south could not proceed beyond NW 4th and Harvey. The ambulance units saw the immediate need in this area and formed a south triage site. This triage site received some of the most severely wounded. A doctor and a Midwest City Ambulance field supervisor arrived and became leaders in organizing this area. About 25 EMSA and mutual aid paramedics and emergency medical technicians went into the Murrah Building to locate and treat the wounded and help bring them out of the building. Several smaller triage sites were set up at other locations where EMSA and medical volunteers found wounded. One was at NW 5th and Harvey where several ambulances coming from the west were stopped. They operated there for a short while. Ten patients, including several critically wounded, were transported from NW 5th.

Doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel arrived to volunteer their services at the triage sites or wherever needed. St. Anthony Hospital organized a large contingent of medical workers, who walked into the area. The NW 6th and NW 4th triage centers each

treated hundreds of people. Incoming ambulances staged at NW 10th and Robinson and entered the area as needed to transport the wounded to hospitals. Law enforcement officers worked to maintain openings for ambulances coming and going from the sites. By 10:30 a.m., 200 patients were transported from the two sites, 138 by ambulance and the remainder by law enforcement personnel or private vehicles. Many wounded never went to triage. Some of the most critically injured were taken from the buildings to ambulances for immediate transport. Law enforcement officers and medical volunteers treated some of the walking wounded on the street. Citizens and officers took many people from the street to the hospital. Some wounded walked to St. Anthony Hospital. Others, with minor injuries, went to their private physicians or to their homes.

Oklahoma City's 15 area hospitals and the medical community were prepared to receive and treat the wounded. Hundreds of doctors and nurses from every medical specialty reported to the emergency rooms. Many came to St. Anthony, the hospital nearest downtown, and to the complex of hospitals on NE 13th Street. Medical personnel stood outside the emergency entrances. Lines of attendants with gurneys and wheelchairs were ready to transfer the wounded from the cars and ambulances. Trauma specialists assessed the wounded and called out the type of care needed. Teams with the required medical skills came forward to receive and treat the patients. The hospitals attempted to get as much identification information as possible



An Oklahoma County Sheriff Bomb Squad unit awaits orders to retrieve what was believed to be a secondary explosive device. Although evacuation orders were given twice as a precaution, no more explosive devices were discovered in or around the Murrah Building.

but waived all formal admission procedures. Almost all of the wounded were received before 10:30 a.m. The hospitals treated 442 people of whom 83 were admitted and 359 were treated in emergency rooms and released. An additional 232 patients were treated in private physicians' offices.

By 9:45 a.m., there were more medical personnel, drivers, and people wanting to help than the site could handle. Oklahoma City Police Department (OCPD) and other law enforcement agencies were establishing a perimeter. However, those who claimed medical or other skills needed at the site were admitted. Shortly after 10:00 a.m., the patient load at the NW 6th Street triage was diminishing. EMSA was told to expect another 100 to 200 patients from the Murrah Building. EMSA command decided to close the NW 6th Street site and move to NW 5th and Harvey in order to be closer to the anticipated second wave of wounded. Preparations to move triage were underway before 10:30 a.m. A statewide disaster medical team, alerted at 9:30 a.m., was on the way to Oklahoma City to set up a field hospital to assist in treating the next wave.

Oklahoma City Police units arrived at 9:04 a.m. The first responders included downtown foot, bicycle, and car patrol units; police service technicians; and four officers, who were testifying at the Federal Courthouse on NW 4th Street. Within a short time, over 150 Police personnel were at the site. They acted in accordance with their training, which gave first priority to saving lives. Many participated in the rescue work at the Murrah Building, others treated the wounded, and some transported the wounded to hospitals in their squad cars. Police Chief Sam Gonzales and other commanders quickly arrived to organize police work and coordinate with the Fire Department. At 9:19 a.m., the Police Command Post vehicle, which was on a training exercise at the Police Training Center at 800 N. Portland, was ordered to the site. It arrived at 9:31 a.m. and was stationed next to the Fire Command area at NW 6th and Harvey. The Murrah bombing occurred in the Police Department's Will Rogers Patrol Division. Major Larry Gramling from that Division was the initial commander of Police operations.

Major Garold Spencer of the Santa Fe Patrol Division activated the 74-member Police Emergency Response Team and ordered them to stage at the Training Center. Squads formed at the Training Center and reported to the Command Post where they were assigned to control the perimeter. Police units quickly established a traffic perimeter from NW 10th Street to Main

and from Broadway to Walker. They attempted to limit access to emergency units, uniformed personnel, and medical workers. The Police perimeter kept the streets clear for emergency vehicles and provided corridors to St. Anthony Hospital and the hospital complex on NE 13th. Mounted patrol units arrived and were assigned to help with crowd control.

Arriving police investigators noted the odor of ammonium nitrate in the smoke. They surveyed the area and saw the crater and the type and extent of the damage. It was evident to them that the damage was the result of a bomb rather than a crash or a natural gas explosion. For the Police, the area was a crime scene as well as a search and rescue operation. OCPD and other law enforcement agencies faced the dual mission of establishing and securing a perimeter for the rescue operation and searching for evidence. Police investigative personnel were assigned to locate and interview any persons who might have witnessed the explosion and to look for evidence.

The Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office sent as many deputies as possible and its bomb disposal unit. Members of the armed forces reserve and guard units first came to the area in an off-duty status, and later in a mobilized effort. The Oklahoma State Medical Examiner's Office began preparing to receive the bodies of those killed. A temporary morgue was established on the day care center playground behind the Murrah Building. The first bodies were taken there. The Medical Examiner determined that the First Methodist Church on the east side of Robinson would be a better location. The Medical Examiner's Office worked with officers from the OCPD homicide unit to establish the temporary morgue at that site. The first six bodies were removed to the church at about 10:30 a.m.

Utility company crews working in the downtown area responded to the disaster. The first Oklahoma Natural Gas (ONG) crews saw that the aboveground commercial gas meters in the blocks north of the Murrah Building were damaged and leaking. It was essential to shut off the gas to the meters before it was ignited by the burning cars and caused secondary explosions. Crews worked quickly, some at great personal risk, to locate and close the valves to the gas lines. About 25 ONG crew members worked at the site. Twelve of them entered the Murrah Building and rescued a woman. Other crews began checking and shutting down gas lines throughout the damaged area.

A supervisor and two Oklahoma Gas and Electric (OG&E) crews were at the Murrah Building by 9:20 a.m.

They could see electrical arcs from damaged live wires in the Murrah Building. At 9:25 a.m., they entered the utility vault on Robinson and shut off the electric power to the building. OG&E crews saw victims trapped on the second floor and tried to reach them in their lift truck. When they could not get the truck close enough to the building, they took a ladder from a fire truck, raised it on the east side of the plaza, and coaxed more than a half-dozen people down the ladder to safety. Some OG&E workers went into the building to help search for survivors. By 10:30 a.m., other OG&E crews shut off the power to the Water Resources Board Building and were working to cut the power to the Journal Record Building.

Local radio and television stations aired reports of the explosion within minutes. Television stations in far northeast Oklahoma City focused tower-mounted cameras on the downtown area and showed pictures of the towering smoke. It was not possible to tell which building was damaged. The first media reports placed the damage at the Federal Courthouse on NW 4th Street. At 9:14 a.m., a media helicopter transmitting live pictures approached from the south of the Murrah Building and slowly circled to the north, capturing the image of the shattered building and the black smoke rising from the burning cars. This transmission gave the community its first clear knowledge of what had happened.

The media began broadcasting live reports from the Murrah site. They requested assistance from anyone with emergency medical or disaster-response capabilities. These broadcasts brought more people to the area and triggered calls offering equipment and materials. Some metropolitan-area fire departments came to the site. Others called Fire Dispatch to make their units available for the rescue work or for duty at Oklahoma City fire stations whose crews and equipment were downtown. Metropolitan area police units came downtown to assist the Oklahoma City Police.

Emergency communications centers were flooded with calls. Within the first hour, 1,800 people tried to call E-9-1-1. Every phone at Fire Dispatch, Fire Administration, Police Administration, and EMSA was ringing. Off-duty personnel reported to the centers so that all lines could be manned. EMSA's Communication Center at NW 10th and Walker received such a volume of calls that the switchboard could not handle the load and blocked all outgoing calls. One of the center's first priorities in a disaster is to check with area hospitals

to determine how many patients each can receive. EMSA staff could not make outside calls. A special radio frequency designed for communication with the hospitals didn't function as many hospitals were not monitoring it. Police officers were sent to hospitals to tell them to monitor the radio and report to EMSA. EMSA used digital pagers to notify all off-duty employees to report for duty.

Police and Fire Dispatchers continued to receive and transmit messages. Each department's two-way radio system was crowded with traffic but functioned throughout the first critical hours. Police, Fire, EMSA, and the other City departments could not communicate directly with each other by radio as each used different frequencies. Requests from one service to another were relayed through the City's Emergency Operations Center, which could receive and transmit on all City channels. Most supervisors had cellular phones. However, in the first critical hour, the cellular systems were overloaded and many calls would not go through. Land-line phones worked, with occasional blockage, but were not available to those at the disaster site. Face-to-face communication and runners had to be used extensively in the early coordination efforts among the emergency services.

Workers at the complex of City office buildings, about five blocks southwest of the Murrah Building, rushed outside, thinking the explosion had been in one of their buildings. After seeing the smoke some blocks away, many staff returned to their buildings, worked to determine what had happened, and then to assist in coordinating the City's response. Management Information Systems checked the City's land-line phone and computer networks and found them to be operational. Some workers went to the site to check on family and friends. Many City workers went to assist in the rescue work and to help transport the wounded.

Assistant City Managers JoeVan Bullard and Penny Barclay were the senior officials at City Hall at 9:00 a.m. Bullard's areas of responsibility included the City's public safety departments. Bullard, Barclay, and some of their staff remained in the building to receive phone calls and get more information. Bullard's first call was from Mayor Ronald Norick. The pictures from the television tower cameras were being broadcast. Mayor Norick saw them and told Bullard, who turned on a television set. The broadcast helped them identify the disaster area.

Norick told Bullard that he would stay at his office in northwest Oklahoma City until more information was

available. Under Oklahoma City's Charter, the Mayor and eight Council members are not full-time officials. They set policies, enact ordinances, and appoint the City Manager, who administers City operations. On April 19 and throughout the rescue operation, Mayor Norick acted in accordance with the Charter. He worked to support the rescue effort, acted as official spokesman for the City, and coordinated efforts between the City, State, and Federal agencies as needed.

Bullard's next call was from Police Chief Sam Gonzales, who reported that the Police Command Post was set up on Harvey. He told Bullard he thought they were dealing with a bomb on the exterior of the Murrah Building. They discussed whether or not downtown businesses should be evacuated and agreed that businesses and offices calling City Hall or the Police Station would be told to evacuate their buildings and send their people home. Bullard called the Mayor about ten minutes later to report what he had learned. Mayor Norick gave phone interviews to the media, knowing that it was important that his remarks avert any panic by assuring the public that the City was already acting to control and manage the disaster. He told the citizens that he did not have any details, that Police and Fire officials were establishing command at the site, that rescue workers were finding and treating the injured, and that people should not go downtown. Mayor Norick remained in his office until after 10:00 a.m. When he was ready to go to the site, he requested the Police Department send officers to drive him downtown so that he would be able to enter the Command Post area.

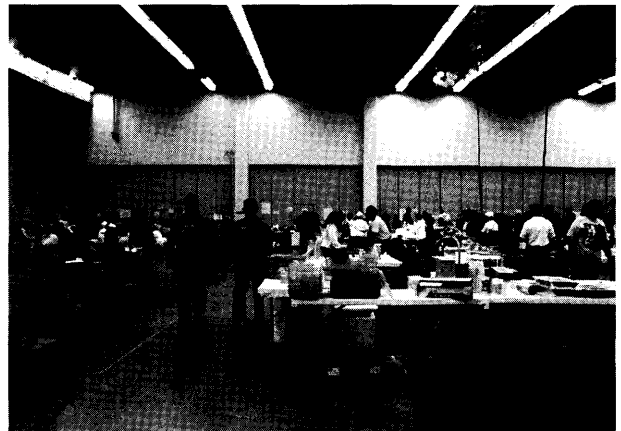
Public Works Street Superintendent Ed Jones went to the disaster site within minutes and saw that heavy equipment and supplies would be needed. The Public Works Department is responsible for providing logistical support during emergency operations. Unable to transmit on his cellular phone, Jones returned to the yard and contacted Director Paul Brum. The director ordered his division heads to get barricades and heavy equipment to the site. Streets Division stripped its warehouse of hard hats and respirators and delivered them to law enforcement personnel and civilians working in the Murrah Building.

Two Oklahoma City Water Line Maintenance field supervisors drove downtown. On their way, they received notification by radio that water needed to be shut off at a building. It was not clear which building. They parked at NW 6th and Harvey and walked into the area. They saw water from a damaged sprinkler system flowing inside the Water Resources Building. They located the meter pit outside the building, shut off the water, and reported to the Fire Command Post on Harvey.


Animal Welfare Division workers participated in the rescue work and assisted law enforcement officers in establishing the perimeter. The General Services Director ordered crews to check City buildings for damage. Will Rogers World Airport went to Security Level No. 1. Airport maintenance personnel swept the terminal and the parking lot for any suspicious objects. Line departments not already involved at the site estimated the personnel and equipment they might need to provide. Parks Department employees took first aid



The Feed the Children area, next to "Satellite City," was only one of several places which provided equipment and supplies during the rescue and recovery efforts.



The Oklahoma Restaurant Association provided thousands of meals to rescue workers and volunteers, both here at the Myriad and at the Murrah site.



equipment and supplies to the rescue site. Off-duty police officers with take-home cars reported in to Police Dispatch and handled assignments throughout the city, replacing the on-duty officers working at the site.

Community, state, and national support began within minutes of the bombing. The American Red Cross' Disaster Action Team was mobilized to assist with the search in the Murrah Building and to perform mass care duties, including serving cold drinks, snacks, and water to the rescue workers and survivors. Feed the Children and the Salvation Army sent teams to support the workers, the victims, and their families. Citizens watching the events unfold on television wanted to help. When the Red Cross put out a call for volunteers and rescue supplies, their office at NE 6th and Lincoln was overwhelmed, as over 1,000 citizens came to register and hundreds more brought supplies. Several thousand more citizens volunteered work and supplies for Feed the Children and the Salvation Army. The Oklahoma Blood Institute opened satellite centers where citizens stood in line for two and three hours to donate blood. The blood centers closed in the late afternoon because the Institute received all the blood it could process. Fast food franchises brought food to the rescue workers.

The Fire Department, realizing they faced a long, difficult day, asked the Oklahoma Restaurant Association to use its trade show resources to provide food for the workers. The Association had sandwiches and coffee on the way to the rescue site at 9:45 a.m. and began preparing lunch. Downtown workers displaced by evacuations began to come to the Myriad. The Association and Myriad staff provided a lounge area for them with food, drinks, and a big screen television. The Restaurant Association provided 20,000 meals on April 19.

Representatives from Boldt Construction Company, Flintco Construction Company and Allied Steel came to the Fire Command Post to offer assistance. Incident Command assigned Boldt Construction to coordinate incoming construction equipment and establish a staging area. Boldt's men scouted the area and selected a parking lot at NW 5th and Shartel, which became the shoring and construction equipment staging site. Allied and Boldt ordered their heavy cranes brought to downtown to support the rescue work. One of Boldt's cranes came from Edmond, about 15 miles north of downtown, with Edmond Police escorting the crane into Oklahoma City.

AT&T Wireless Services and Southwestern Bell Mobile Systems (SWBMS), the two area cellular phone companies, began immediate distribution of free cellular phones to the Command Posts, rescue units, and officials from government and volunteer groups. Both companies undertook strenuous efforts to improve cellular communications in the disaster area. SWBMS added additional channel capacity to its cell sites near downtown. AT&T Wireless Services implemented a priority call system for the phones used at the site. Both companies set up sites to provide a constant supply of new batteries, additional phones, and battery recharging.

Tinker Air Force Base (TAFB) received a bomb threat at 9:30 a.m. and another at 11:30 a.m. The Base implemented increased security measures and instituted a 100% check at all entry points. Tinker employees held a blood drive. Air crews were put on alert for medi-vac duty. The TAFB Fire Department dispatched fire and ambulance equipment and crews to take part in the rescue work.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) offices were in the 50 Penn Place office tower and shopping mall in the northwest part of the city. The building was evacuated and closed out of concern that the FBI office could be another bomb target. Because the explosion had damaged a federal building and killed federal workers, the disaster site was a federal crime scene. At 10:00 a.m. the FBI established a Command Post in the Murrah area and activated a crisis management team that included representatives from the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). U.S. Marshals from the Federal Courthouse came to the command area and made themselves available for assignment. They were directed to establish a crime scene perimeter around the immediate disaster site.

Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers began searching the area for evidence. They looked for bomb fragments, which would provide residue to identify the type of explosive, and for fragments of the delivery vehicle. Information about the explosive and the method of delivery were needed to help identify the perpetrator. They worked to determine the dispersal pattern of the fragments in order to estimate the size of the bomb. At about 10:00 a.m., investigators searching the NW 5th Street area saw a truck rear end and axle laying at the curb in front of the Regency Tower Apartments. They noted that the vehicle identification number could be read and notified the FBI. Investigators later found the vehicle's front axle

on NW 5th Street in front of the YMCA Building and the charred, twisted remains of the chassis in front of the Murrah Building.

Effective state support and coordination began shortly after 9:02 a.m. and continued throughout the incident. The staff of the Oklahoma Department of Civil Emergency Management (DCEM), under the leadership of Director Tom Feuerborn, went to a 24-hour operation to support and coordinate the work of state agencies and provide coordination with federal agencies. The Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act governs the provision of federal assistance in disasters. The Act requires the Governor to request federal assistance and the President to issue a formal Declaration of Disaster. At 9:30 a.m., DCEM officially notified Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VI Director Buddy Young of the disaster. At 9:40 a.m., State emergency personnel were sent to the site to coordinate with OCFD command and set up a DCEM Command Post.

At 9:45 a.m., Governor Frank Keating sent all state nonemergency personnel home and made a verbal declaration of disaster. At 10:00 a.m., the Oklahoma National Guard began preparations in anticipation of being activated. At 10:35 a.m., FEMA put the Urban Search and Rescue task forces from Phoenix, Arizona, and Sacramento, California, on alert and placed two other task forces on standby. At 10:55 a.m. FEMA activated an Incident Support Team and the Phoenix and Sacramento task forces. The Virginia Beach, Virginia, and New York City, New York, task forces were placed on standby. FEMA's Mobile Emergency Response Service (MERS) was alerted to provide communications services for the FBI.

Agents from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI), the state's primary investigative agency, and troopers from the Oklahoma Highway Patrol were among the first responders in the rescue and first aid work. By 10:30 a.m., OSBI agents were working with the Police and the FBI. The Highway Patrol established a Command Post and troopers assisted with traffic control. The Highway Patrol Bomb Squad assisted the FBI and ATF in marking evidence at the scene and checking objects found in the debris. The Highway Patrol began to assist with perimeter duties and to help track the arrival and deployment of volunteer police officers from other cities.

City administrators used the first hour to focus on gathering information, handling citizen calls, and be-

ing available to provide support to the rescue work. City Manager Don Bown left a meeting at the Municipal League when he heard the explosion. While on his way downtown, he listened to the first radio reports of the disaster. He was unable to contact his office by cellular phone. Bown reached City Hall at about 9:25 a.m. and was briefed by his staff. Early reports indicated that the bomb caused great devastation in the impact area but had not damaged Oklahoma City's infrastructure. Streets, bridges, traffic control systems, water and sewer lines, and storm drainage systems were intact. The utility companies reported damage in the blast area but telephone, gas, and electrical transmission lines throughout the rest of the city functioned with no problems. Bown and Bullard decided to go to the site to get a firsthand picture of the damage and the rescue effort. They went to the Command Post area on Harvey, arriving at about 10:15 a.m.

They met with Chief Marrs, Chief Gonzales, and Senior FBI Agent Bob Ricks. They walked from the Command Post area to the front of the Murrah Building. The framework of the City's administrative management of the incident was set at this time. Bown, who appointed Chief Gonzales and Chief Marrs, had complete confidence in both men. He knew that the Fire Department had implemented its Incident Command System and that the Police Department and other departments were trained to coordinate their emergency response efforts with the Fire Department. From the first minutes and throughout the days that followed, Bown's



Moments after the evacuation order at 10:30 a.m., crew members of Engine 6 await word to continue rescue operations. The ladders of Truck 8 and Truck 5 are in position after removing several of the injured, but personnel have been evacuated from the site.

response was not to take control, but to support the Fire and Police Chiefs. The City Manager told the Chiefs that they were in charge of the incident and that they could go directly to other City departments for anything they needed. Chief Gonzales made it clear that he recognized the primary role of the Fire Department and that his people would support Chief Marrs in every possible way.

The Chiefs briefed the City Manager on the status of the incident. Fire units had completed primary and secondary searches of the other damaged buildings. While some volunteers remained in the Murrah Building, Oklahoma City Fire, Police, and other emergency service workers were conducting the primary rescue effort. Fire Department radio traffic indicated controlled activities in all parts of the building. OCPD had organized a primary sweep of all floors of the Murrah Building. At 10:16 a.m., officers reported by radio that floors four through nine were clear of survivors as best they could determine without using search dogs. The U.S. Marshals, OCPD, and other law enforcement agencies had established a perimeter around the disaster site and were limiting access to the area.

The briefing ended abruptly just before 10:30 a.m. when people began to rush out of the Murrah Building. Chief Marrs first thought that they were being alerted to a possible building collapse. Then he heard that a bomb had been found. Chief Marrs contacted Incident Command and told them to determine a safe perimeter for a possible blast. The Chiefs hurried to the NW 6th and Harvey command site. They learned that a rescue worker, who was leaving the Murrah Building, had told a GSA worker that he had seen a suitcase on the second floor that looked suspicious and could be a bomb. The GSA worker spread the word of a possible bomb and contacted a firefighter, who reported to the Fire Command Post, which in turn reported the possible bomb to the Police Command Post.

Fire, Police, FBI, Highway Patrol, and other leaders at the Command Post area had to evaluate the situation and determine a course of action. There was no way to quickly confirm or deny the worker's information. They knew that terrorists often target rescue areas for secondary explosions. Their primary concern was the safety of all the people working in and around the Murrah Building. They had no choice but to treat the report as a valid bomb threat. At 10:28 a.m., Incident Command ordered an evacuation of the site until the suitcase could be found. At 10:30 a.m., a General Alarm was called, bringing off-duty firefighters to stage

at Fire Station No. 1. Word to evacuate the area was passed by radio and word of mouth. Firefighters, police, and volunteers were ordered out of the Murrah Building. Law enforcement personnel were ordered to enforce the evacuation and get everyone out. Hundreds of people, already in shock from seeing the impact of the bombing, fled from the threat of a second bomb.

Some workers in the Murrah Building resisted the order to leave because they were extricating survivors from the debris. Firefighters had been working for 30 minutes to free a woman whose legs were trapped under a huge piece of concrete. At the last possible moment they freed her and carried her from the building. Other units, forced to leave three trapped survivors, made solemn promises to return and left with tears in their eyes. Most of those at the site retreated to the north. The first OCFD officer to reach NW 10th and Harvey brought rudimentary order to the area by staging police, fire, utility, media, and other groups on the corners of the intersection and the nearby area. Fire equipment was ordered to stage around NW 12th and Harvey.

By 10:30 a.m., the critically injured, who had been removed from the building, had been transported to hospitals. The less severely injured were still being treated at the triage sites when the evacuation began. Some of the wounded were placed in ambulances and cars and evacuated. The remainder got up and fled on foot. The 4th Street triage unit moved south to Couch Drive near the County and City office buildings. The 6th Street triage, which was in the process of moving to NW 5th Street, moved east on 5th Street, stopping at Oklahoma Avenue by a large empty warehouse. The security guard offered to open the building for the EMSA units. They accepted the offer and established a triage and treatment center in the warehouse. Some of the ambulances staged on NE 5th Street and some continued to stage on NW 10th.

The Police Command Post moved to a vacant lot on the west side of Harvey, north of NW 8th Street. The Command Post site was enclosed with crime scene tape and officers posted to provide security. The Command Post was equipped with a telephone system that provided land-line telephone communications during mobile operations. Command Post communications were disrupted when the Command Post phone number was inadvertently broadcast as a number to call for information about missing relatives. Hundreds of people tried to call the Command Post number. The

Command Post had to have new lines with new telephone numbers.

The City's telecommunications manager arrived in the area at the time of the evacuation and followed the Command Post as it moved north. He worked with crews from Southwestern Bell Telephone Company to have the closest available lines run to the vehicle. Bell ran four lines from a nearby pole into the vehicle. These were active lines, which rang at both the original location and the Command Post. However, this stopped the flood of calls and gave the Command Post land-line communications.

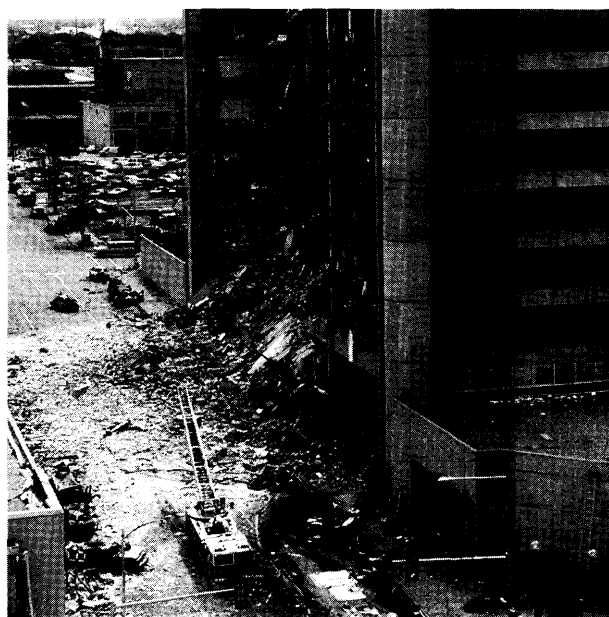
Some police officers stayed at the Murrah site. They saw a critical need to establish a secure crime scene perimeter. When the evacuation was complete, they used barriers and crime scene tape to secure the one-block area around the building. At 10:40 a.m., OCPD reported that the area around the Murrah Building was controlled. The Police Emergency Response Team used the evacuation to establish an outer perimeter bounded by NW 7th on the north, Robert S. Kerr on the south, Walker Avenue on the west, and Broadway on the east. Oklahoma Highway Patrol and other law enforcement officers assisted in erecting and manning the barricades. Control of the outer perimeter was gained by 11:20 a.m.

Plans to relocate Fire Incident Command to a point further north of the disaster site had been under way before 10:30 a.m. An officer had been sent to locate a site. As the Fire Command vehicle moved north during the evacuation, the officer reported that Southwestern Bell Telephone Company had offered its headquarters building and parking lot at One Bell Central. Fire Command moved into the lot, which was on the east side of Harvey between NW 7th and NW 8th Streets.

Once the evacuation was complete, Oklahoma City Police, Oklahoma Highway Patrol, and Oklahoma County Sheriff Bomb Squads entered the building along with special canine units. They searched for a suitcase or any possible explosive. They did not find a suitcase. The all clear was given at 11:22 a.m.



Members of the Oklahoma City Police Department and County Sheriff's Department remain at their posts to maintain the security of the crime scene after the evacuation order.



Truck 8 is removed from the north side of the Murrah Building after the evacuation order. A triage area lies in the street, deserted by the medical personnel ordered to leave a few minutes ago. The crater is visible near the tip of the ladder.

