

Canton Company on the job at Ground Zero

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Canton company at Ground Zero



Hundreds of miles away from Mansfield, Massachusetts a young boy sits in his room in lower Manhattan playing with trucks. He lines them up, front to back, as if they were parked along the sidewalk. Like other boys his age, his daily games come packaged nicely in imagination, however, his truck playing fantasies stumble up the surface of reality when he tells his mother one day, "They're FM trucks."

FM Generator is a Canton company that installs and services generators. It's the company Mansfield resident Lance Koren works for as a service technician in a job that has taken him to Ground Zero in New York since Sept. 13. He parks his FM truck in front of this young boy's house each day. The Boy's mother shared this story with Koren during the weeks he has spent in New York, helping at Ground Zero and at the crash site of Flight 587 in Queens. Koren was headed into Cambridge to maintain a generator at the Department of Transportation when the first plane crashed into the World Trade Center towers and he heard the shocking news on the radio. He did not know at the time he would play a role in the disaster.

When the two World Trade Center Towers collapsed, FM Generator President Michael Molway was called by Verizon Wireless. The Cell Sites that were contained in the World Trade Center buildings had been lost and cell phone traffic was unable to be contained by the other cell sites in the area. Verizon was bringing "COW", - cell sites on wheels into the city to handle cell phone traffic, and Molway's company generators were needed. A full crew of about 12 men was sent to New York, including Koren.

When Koren arrived in New York City he wore a respirator, hard hat, and safety glasses. The smoke was still thick and the streets were filled with broken windows, dust and rubble. Small ash particles lingered in the air. While his surroundings were hellish, Koren said he recalls the beauty of people's actions. "There was so much giving," he said, as he described the clothes, blankets and boots the Salvation Army and American Red Cross donated and the free burgers handed out by McDonald's and Burger King.

"There's a lot of unity," Koren said. "It's like one big family down here. Originally, Molway said, his company had about 25 generators in the Ground Zero area. Each generator requires about 1,000 gallons of fuel each day, and each cell site handles about 600 phone calls a minute. The generators which supplied power to the cell sites were supplied to Verizon, AT&T, Sprint PCS, the Salvation Army and various news agencies.

Presently, FM has about 10 generators still at Ground Zero, which Koren helps maintain. "I do the work of two guys" Koren said. "One night a generator caught on fire," he said, and he had to put in about 18-20 hours of work that day. "Sometimes that stuff happens." He said. Koren was also called to the site of the Flight 587 crash in Queens. Three or four generators were needed on the scene. Koren was one of the first people to arrive. "I saw them put bodies into body bags," he said, "I couldn't believe it was happening again."

Koren said he anticipates he will return home to Mansfield in the spring. He said all his neighbors have been supportive and positive about his work. "If they don't see the company truck that I park near my home," he said, "They know where I am."