

FM Generator Joins Relief Effort

By Ryan Benharris
Citizen Staff



FM Generator, Inc. has become a part of the disaster relief effort in New York City. The Canton Company is currently installing and maintaining new generators around the World Trade Center to replace the ones that were destroyed three weeks ago. "It's almost indescribable," said FM manager Michael Molway of the disaster site.

Molway and three other FM employees went to the area in Manhattan known as the "Red Zone" several days after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Their primary goal was to install generators to power the cell phone sites destroyed by the crash, Molway said. Since then, the company has been sending three or four people on 2-3 day shifts around the clock. According to Molway, each of the destroyed cell sites could handle between 400 and 800 calls per minute, and after hundreds of sites were mined, cell phone usage became almost non-existent in all of Manhattan.

"The first couple of days were really chaotic," Molway said. "It still is like marshal law, You have to go through several security checkpoints just to get in and out of the site." Employees of the company knew soon after the disaster happened that they were going to be heading to New York, Molway said, noting that FM specialized in disaster recovery and has been the vendor of choice for that particular area since 1985.

In New York, the company now has two generators running at all times, one, a primary generator that produces electricity for all of the wireless phones, and the other a back up, in case something goes wrong. Molway said the generators, which power portable cell sites installed by phone companies such as Verizon and AT&T need to be constantly maintained. To pull all of this off, Molway said FM had to set up a small "shop on wheels", fully equipped with trucks, tankers, ATV's and anything else they may need. All of their products, however, are supplied from the company's Pequit St. facility, he said. After working in the area Molway said he and other FM employees are constantly 'reliving' what they experienced and saw. "It's just like you see on TV," said FM General Manager Paul Bishop, "only ten times worse."

FM Workers, "feel like they are living a part of history," Molway said, adding that the company is doing everything it can to help. "Some workers are sleeping on the sidewalk after 48 straight hours of labor," he said.

Molway said conditions have improved slightly, but there is still a massive amount of work to do, especially at Ground Zero. "We just play it by ear," he said. "It changes day by day."