

# JSC travelers home and overseas caught up amid tragedy

By Bill Jeffs

One hundred twenty-eight JSC employees were on business travel Sept. 11, many across the country and others in foreign countries, when tragedy struck America.

Following the suspension of commercial air traffic in the U.S., some travelers remained holed up in hotels in the United States and abroad, waiting for word as to when they could fly home. Others within driving distance rented cars and drove back to Houston.

NASA transportation specialist Connye Lenczewski with the JSC International Services Office said the locations of all travelers were accounted for on the day of the attacks. Most of those in the United States rented cars and returned home to Houston by Thursday, Sept. 13, or were in the process of doing so.

"A number of people in Los Angeles rented cars and drove back to Houston. Others, especially those overseas, are talking to their management and

making arrangements to stay longer and then fly home whenever possible," said Lenczewski.

Others across the U.S. with travel plans stayed in place. Some of the STS-104 crewmembers took advantage of their few extra days in Los Angeles to make an unscheduled visit to a school.

The JSC Speakers Bureau had two employees en route to fulfill speaking engagements. Robert Naughton, NASA chief, Aircraft Operations Division, flew from Houston to Chicago on Sept. 10 to speak to 100 attendees at the AAR Corp. (a supplier of products and services to the aerospace/aviation industry) Senior Leadership Retreat.

Three days following the attacks, Naughton was in Oak Brook, IL, waiting to fly back to Houston.

Phil Stepaniak, NASA flight surgeon, found himself grounded in Florida due to the airport closures. On Monday, Sept. 10, the day before the attacks, he traveled to Florida where he rendezvoused with three colleagues, all of whom had flown from Houston.

The following day, he was in the process of speaking to a group at Patrick Air Force Base on contingency plans in the event of a Space Shuttle mishap when he was twice interrupted, once when news about the attacks on the World Trade Center broke and then when the Pentagon was struck. "At that point, the base was shut down to only essential personnel and placed on maximum alert," Stepaniak said.

One day after the attacks and still with no way to fly back to Houston, Stepaniak and his three travel mates turned in all but one of their rental cars, which they had been told to hold onto since they would be in short supply, and began a 20-hour drive. Taking turns driving home, they arrived in Houston in the early morning on Sept. 13.

Others couldn't drive home. "We're wondering whether we'll be able to fly home," said Rob Navias, NASA associate director, JSC's Public Affairs Office, stranded in Paris with a 20-person delegation.

Three days after the attacks, he and a colleague were hoping to fly from Paris

to Atlanta and then on to Houston. "We don't know if we'll be allowed to leave. We don't know if we'll get to Houston," he said. However, they made it home.

The outpouring of support and sympathy for the NASA delegation there has been tremendous, Navias said. "From the moment of the tragedy on Tuesday, all of the international partners have offered condolences to try to comfort us."

He added that hotel management put a special note in each room of the NASA delegation offering condolences. And Parisians, hearing English speakers discussing the tragedy, offered their support as well.

Stepaniak noted a few lessons learned for future travelers. "Be sure to contact everyone and inform them of your location. Also make sure you have your travel orders, your NASA identification and your government credit card with you," he said. "And keep in frequent touch with CI travel personnel. Retain your rental car and keep all of your available travel options open until you decide or are told where and how to travel." ■

## NEWS FROM WHITE SANDS

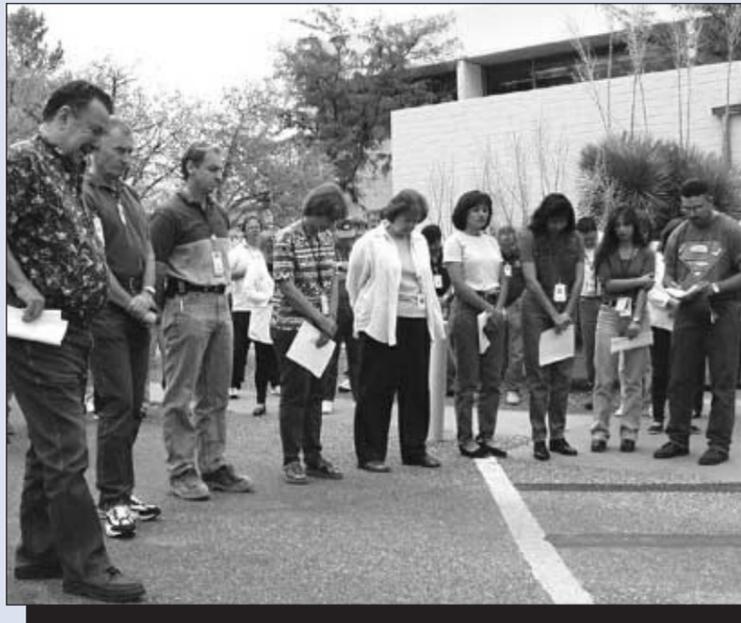
### WSTF remembers those who lost their lives on Sept. 11

White Sands Test Facility mourned the tragic attacks on Washington, D.C. and New York City with a five-minute prayer vigil on Sept. 14.

WSTF Manager Joe Fries said the attacks have "challenged us individually and collectively. It has left us with many unanswered questions."

However, he added it was comforting that the nation has come together as one. "Those of us on the periphery of the events are nonetheless affected in how our comfortable, secure way of life might be impacted," he said.

"I feel that it is important that we support the leaders of our country in their decisions that will keep us the great, free country that we are and want to continue to be."



Bob Baker, Program Manager, Honeywell Technology Solutions Inc., also spoke at the ceremony.

"It is a terrible hour for our country. Although we've been fortunate here, this event will affect us and the rest of the country for a long time," he said.

"I urge you to stand behind the President and our national security agencies over the upcoming months, and also to support our country through donations and volunteer service to disaster relief."

The singing of "God Bless America" also was done in remembrance, compassion, resolve and in honor of those who lost their lives in the tragedy. ■

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To learn the **current status of the Center**, call the Employee News Service at (281) 483-6765.

The **Emergency Information Lines** are 281-483-3351 (local) and 1-877-283-1947 (toll free) for employees on travel.

Three other important Web sites are:

◆ **Daily CyberSpace Roundup** <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/pao/roundup/index.html>  
It has center status information as part of the masthead.

◆ **The Public Affairs Office** <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/pao/> It also has relevant employee news.

◆ **JSC EOC Office** [www.jsc.nasa.gov/da/da5/](http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/da/da5/) It has only been used for severe weather, such as tropical storm and hurricane threats. However it can be used to support other situations of interest to employees too, said Bob Gaffney, Emergency Preparedness Manager.

