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Oakland County will take time to honor 9/11 victims, heroes on Wednesday



A number of different police agencies attended the Michigan Fallen Heroes Memorial Ceremony in Pontiac. Tuesday, September 11, 2012. The Oakland Press/TIM THOMPSON

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By **Carol Hopkins**, *The Oakland Press*

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Oakland County and the nation will once again take time to remember the tragedies of Sept. 11 on Wednesday with prayer and services.

On Sept. 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people were killed during terrorist attacks in New York City; Shanksville, Pa.; and Arlington, Va.

In Pontiac, the Michigan Fallen Heroes Memorial Annual Sept. 11th ceremony will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday.

Special tribute will be paid to fallen police officers and firefighters from across Michigan during this ceremony. New names being added to the Memorial Wall, include Sgt. Patrick O'Rourke from West Bloomfield Police Department, and Wayne-Westland Fire Authority Firefighter Brian Woehlke. Both men were killed in the line of duty.

"This year will be especially tough," Bouchard said, because many in area law enforcement knew O'Rourke.

"The closer it is to you personally, the more emotional it can be," he said. O'Rourke's widow, Amy O'Rourke, is scheduled to speak at the Pontiac ceremony.

Bouchard said work continues on the large memorial near the Sheriff's Office. He hopes by year's end a weather-proof kiosk will be finished, which will allow visitors to search the names of the fallen by computer.

Woehlke was fighting a business fire May 8 when a building fell on him as he was fighting a fire in Westland.

The memorial is at 1200 North Telegraph, Pontiac, on the northeast corner of Telegraph Road and County Center Drive East (north entrance) next to Building 38 East on Oakland County's complex.

Bouchard recalled where he was in 2001 when news broke of planes hitting the towers in New York.

"I was in the office," he said. "When the first plane hit, we thought it was terribly sad and prayed for people."

But then the second plane hit the World Trade Center.

"We thought the nation could be under attack, so we spun into gear," he said.

Plans were set up to protect possible targets in Oakland County, including businesses' world headquarters.

"We called people in to do 12-hour shifts," Bouchard said.

A team of 15 officers left that evening to help out at Ground Zero in New York City. About a day and a half later, Bouchard drove to join them.

"We eventually raised \$500,000 and gave the money to the people in New York," he said.