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Richard C. Powell
April 30, 2002

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SEPTEMBER 11TH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
RICHARD C. POWELL
Chief of Risk Management National Park Service

Conducted by
JANET MCDONNELL, PhD

April 30, 2002
Washington, D.C.

START OF TAPE

- Janet McDonnell: This is Janet McDonnell. It's April 30, 2002, and I'm here with Dick Powell, and your title is -
- Richard Powell: I am the Chief of Risk Management for the National Park Service.
- Janet McDonnell: We're here to talk about the Park Service response to the September 11th attacks. Maybe just to start if you would talk about how you first learned about the attack.
- Richard Powell: Let me preface that Risk Management includes employee safety and health, and public safety, as well as worker's comp, so I cross a number of lines, and I did subsequent to 9/11.
- Richard Powell: Prior to 9/11, National Park Service was in the process of moving to the G Street office, which is three blocks north of here. A third of the Park Service, and that was administration primarily, budget and human resources, had moved up there. At the same time, there was the protests that were being anticipated - International Monetary Fund/World Bank protests. There were also protests that were anticipated as a kind of an offshoot of that, an opportunity to protest against Gale Norton and her stand about ANWAR, the Fish and Wildlife's turf up in Alaska. So, there were a lot of violent protests, seriously violent protests.
- Richard Powell: The intelligence we had was that it was going to be a very dangerous time for our employees, so security was very high, and there was all kinds of preparation being made by the Department for that, which really positioned them for just implementing these security measures immediately after 9/11.
- Richard Powell: Well, when our folks moved up to G Street, we were looking at the security of the G Street office in the context of those protests because the main headquarters of the World Bank is directly across the street from where we were going to move into. And they were also located the floor above us. So, there was very poor security, no checking in or going through any kind of security measures at the bottom floor. There is a garage - a commercial garage downstairs, no security at all down there. Anybody can go in and park and drive in.
- Richard Powell: So, I was very concerned about it, and I expressed that concern, and other people were concerned as well. So, we moved them back to the Main Interior Building the prior week. Not a lot of happy campers about that. We didn't even have a place for them, and there was just no furniture or anything for them.

- Janet McDonnell: You moved them back into Main Interior the week before the September 11th attack.
- Richard Powell: And then they moved back up there the Saturday, which would be September 8, 9, and 10, moved back up there. On September 11, I walked to the G Street office because we were next. Operations was next, and we were going to move into the floor above where they had moved into, and I was checking out how they were doing, because the stress was very high with those employees. But on the way up there, I heard somebody's radio blaring something about a plane crashing, and I didn't know exactly where it was.
- Richard Powell: Then I got up to the floor that everybody was moving into, and somebody asked me had you heard about not only one, but two planes that had crashed in the World Trade Center, and that was a shock. Of course, everybody was talking about it, and there was a radio that somebody had. So, we were trying to learn a little bit more about that, and I went up to the floor above us, and that's where the workers were still working, and it was just a skeleton of walls and things like that. There was nobody else except myself and the workers, and I was looking at my space up there, and I heard the workers shouting, and a lot of profanity.
- Richard Powell: At that point I didn't know what they were talking about, but it kept going on. So, I looked around the corner and they were all looking out south, and it was the Pentagon burning. It was the huge bellows of smoke were coming off of the Pentagon, and we see - couldn't see real clearly the Pentagon itself, but you could see—
- Janet McDonnell: You could see the smoke from there.
- Richard Powell: —the smoke. And then somebody else came up saying, "We've got to evacuate." So, we all - everybody just got out of the building, and I went back to Main Interior, and I had a hard time getting into the building, because they just shut that place up tight. But anyway, I got back into Main Interior, talked my way in to get my keys.
- Richard Powell: I had taken the bus that morning, and I didn't have a car. But my lady friend, her friend I caught in the hallway and asked how she was getting home, because she was staying with my lady friend during the week when she commutes down from Front Royal.
- Richard Powell: So, we loaded the car with four of us, just to get out of the city, and it was just virtually a standstill. It was just amazing how gridlocked it was. Come to find out, the city had not coordinated at all with the counties and the Highway Department, and the outbound lanes were still closed for incoming traffic. So, there were people along the side of the road

hitchhiking, or just walking, people streaming across the bridge—the Roosevelt Bridge—just to get away.

Richard Powell: We didn't know what was going on. We had the radio on, and we, of course, heard more about it. There were rumors that there was an attack on the Lincoln Memorial, just rumors flying all over the place; rumors about other planes in the air, one heading down from the north. So we finally made it back to my friend's house in Arlington, and decided we better go to the store because we didn't know what was going to be happening, and it was just like everybody was completely confused about it, and the news reports were very confusing. So, I did, I went to the store and bought some additional provisions.

Richard Powell: That kind of ended the day, other than just being glued to the TV. The following day, I told my employees to stay home.

Janet McDonnell: Before you go to the next day, I just have a quick question. When you mentioned that the people at G Street were brought back to Main Interior and then put back at G Street, how was that decision made? Had some additional security measures been added in between?

Richard Powell: Yes. They had agreed—the building manager had very reluctantly agreed to add some additional security measures. You couldn't get through into the elevators without going through, just like we have at Main Interior, a guard and metal detector, things like that, and also coming up from the garage.

Janet McDonnell: I was just going to ask, but no evacuation plan or anything had been put in place yet, I would imagine, for the people in that building.

Richard Powell: No. That was a big concern about that, is that there be an evacuation plan immediately, which they did. They put an evacuation plan together real rapidly, and so people felt like well, I'm a little bit more comfortable about moving back. And so, we finally convinced everybody that—I was sitting in on these meetings and the building manager subsequently—the owners of the building, I think, subsequently fired the building manager because of his—how difficult he was to address security issues.

Richard Powell: So those devices were not in place, but there was a promise, they were on order. So, we moved them back.

Janet McDonnell: I'll let you go on, then, with the next day.

Richard Powell: We weren't sure if we were going to come back to work or not. I told my employees not to come back. I did come back, and there were a lot of meetings, of course, about what next, and the following day, on the 12th,

we had an announcement. People were going up and down the halls telling everybody to go immediately to the basement, and that was under the direction of Steve Griles, the Deputy Secretary.

Richard Powell: So, we got downstairs, and we were told that there was a plane coming out of Canada that they weren't sure about, so to stay in the basement. And it was during that time—I think that was—well, there was a lot of meetings of the directors of each of the bureaus that were around, and the senior executives were meeting to try to determine what to do next. And the Park Service kind of stepped up to the plate there because we had been used to dealing with emergency situations, and so several of the—Rick Gale being one of them—was down there. He kind of worked with Fran Mainella, our director, and kind of got things to where it was a little bit more orderly downstairs, where bureaus would segregate into their own areas so that they could all account for each other and what was going on.

Janet McDonnell: When you say downstairs, do you mean—

Richard Powell: Cafeteria.

Janet McDonnell: Okay, so that morning bureaus were actually separating their employees down there?

Richard Powell: Yes. They were trying to. I mean, it was a big hodgepodge. But they attempted to have each of the bureaus kind of meet in a particular area. It wasn't terribly successful, but at least they attempted to do that, and realized in the future that that's one of the things they would have to take care of, is to make sure that when there is an evacuation that occurs, the bureaus need to know where to go. And, of course, since that time a very detailed evacuation plan is in effect here in Main Interior, and we have done that. We met and had a big evacuation practice and everything, so it seemed to work pretty well.

Janet McDonnell: And as I understand it, there was no, for want of a better word, intercom system. I mean, someone had to go get Director Mainella a bull horn.

Richard Powell: Megaphone, yes, and she used it and Steve Griles used it also. They were trying to shout, but the room is so big that the voice wasn't carrying very well. So, they got a megaphone. And they realized how poor the communication system is because there's no way of communicating building-wide, and that's one of the things that still, to this day, they haven't gotten in place. But they have a plan now, because there was no way of communicating to our employees as to what to do, so people had to go up and down and shout, "You've got to get downstairs."

- Janet McDonnell: But just to clarify a bit, at that point in time, the Park Service didn't have a plan for its employees, an evacuation plan from this building?
- Richard Powell: Not really. There was an evacuation plan for the building, and it wasn't practiced very often. In fact, I don't even recall it being practiced. There had been evacuations because of a bomb threat or a fire or something like that, and everybody was assembled out each door, and that's about it, which was awkward because the fire trucks couldn't get in.
- Janet McDonnell: It's a little bit different than in an emergency like this.
- Richard Powell: Yes, because there were so many people involved, and of course, everybody else in other buildings were outside, too.
- Janet McDonnell: Were you involved at all in the continuity of operations plan, and the implementation of that plan?
- Richard Powell: I was not. Here is where it became frustrating for me in the days following 9/11 because they brought an incident team in, an overhead team, to try to cope with the situation, and they were situated right down the hall here, the 7400 corridor. But that became - it was very cramped, and they finally situated them across the street in South Interior.
- Richard Powell: Nobody knew really—it was—[in] the days following 9/11, there was a lot of security measures, immediate. I mean, there were guns all over the place. Everybody that remotely was in law enforcement and security, especially down the hall in the Department, were wearing guns, and they were focused on security. But there was very little focus per se on employee safety. And that's where it became very frustrating for me, because I was trying to find how I could fit into this, and it was difficult to get into the groups.
- Richard Powell: I mean, I would insert myself and start working—I did work with the overhead team.
- Janet McDonnell: When you say the overhead team, you mean the all-risk Type 1 incident team?
- Richard Powell: Exactly. And I was working with them as far as dealing with issues relating to employee safety. But they weren't focused on employee safety, they were focused on security of buildings, what the National Park Service is going to be doing as far as securing our icons - the Washington Monument, Mount Rushmore, dams, and things like that - and rightfully so. But I was not asked at all to participate, either at the Director's level or the directorate until anthrax. And when anthrax occurred, well, when the anthrax attack occurred, they suddenly started to realize that security folks

didn't know anything about employee safety and health and started looking for answers. And that's where I more seriously entered the picture.

Richard Powell: I was working, Dick Ring and the Director had asked me to sit in on the meetings, their senior staff meetings, and start on their behalf coordinating with the Department on an approach to how to deal with the anthrax situation.

Richard Powell: I had not worked at that level in the Department. I worked with the Department all the time, but not at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level. They didn't know who I was, and I was trying to insert myself into that situation. And I had a meeting with the Deputy Assistant Secretary, and they started to - well, what we decided to do in the National Park Service, because the Department wasn't meeting with its employees, and our employees wanted to have some answers, because anthrax was very scary, and because the mail was coming into our building. It had gone through the Brentwood Postal Service facility, and they were very afraid.

Richard Powell: I tried to get into, and I did meet with the Department, and especially the folks in the National Business Center (NBC) downstairs to try to figure out what they were doing about the mail, and they were, of course, scrambling around for answers for themselves. They were purchasing respirators that were probably not even effective, but they were doing that because the employees were afraid.

Richard Powell: They have an industrial hygienist that's on staff, and they weren't listening really to him too much. Eventually, we all kind of started meeting together, and realizing that we didn't have a lot of answers. I sought some assistance from the Public Health Service, and he brought two Public Health Service officers in to support and assist me and work with me so that we could start training our employees or educating them on anthrax and kind of diffusing close to panic.

Janet McDonnell: Did you find that there was good information out there that you could tap into in order to provide the employees with what they needed? Did you have any trouble getting good information about anthrax, or the risks?

Richard Powell: Originally, we were getting quite a bit of information all from our Public Health Service folks because they found some web sites, and so did the Department - the Department's folks here and also the industrial hygienist in Denver that works for the Department, Tim Radtke. They were very helpful in focusing us on where to find information—CDC [Center for Disease Control], for example, and a number of other web sites. And so one of the things I needed is to have somebody from—ultimately the Public Health Service helped a lot—is to distill all this huge amount of

information that was starting to flow about anthrax, and Johns Hopkins University, and some of these web sites.

- Richard Powell: Then they put on a training program for the folks over at 800 North Capitol. They asked specifically. Kate Stevenson wanted to have her people - they were very concerned. So, we put on a training program for them, and folks over here at the National Park Service wanted the same thing over here, so we put on another program over here. And the Department sat in on that meeting and decided that they had better start planning on a big meeting for the Department of Interior.
- Richard Powell: So, I had to do some tall talking to get the Public Health Service to keep their folks around, because they were going to cycle those two folks that we had here back to their offices, and they were excellent. They were absolutely phenomenal. And so, they stayed over the weekend, and basically were the points of contact, and held forth when the Secretary and her staff met across the street at the—
- Janet McDonnell: The DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution building]?
- Richard Powell: Constitutional Hall. And so that's—the Public Health Service guys were on the stage, and they educated everybody on what anthrax was, and the Department did their thing about mail handling, and the Department geared up pretty well. But nobody really had a lot of pat answers, and as we find out, CDC didn't have a lot of pat answers, too, because then they started to realize what happened at the Hill, and then those two employees at Brentwood died. And they realized that they better start decontaminating and doing some epidemiological look at this to see where in the heck this stuff is coming from.
- Richard Powell: So, everybody was scrambling around, of course, trying to - and I received a letter after we got some information out about what to be careful of on mail handling, I received a letter that had the classic symptoms. There was no return address, it was hand-written in almost illegible writing, and there were all the signs. And the Secretary had received several of those letters, too.
- Richard Powell: So, the FBI came in and checked those envelopes and everything, and this was all - we really didn't know. We knew what envelopes like that looked like, but nobody knew what to do with them. And people were calling throughout the United States for answers from us.
- Janet McDonnell: Were you getting calls from regional offices and parks as well?
- Richard Powell: Absolutely. You'd get them from, for example, Hawai'i. Hawai'i received some very strange packages like Haleakalā and Hawai'i Volcanoes

National Parks because people take things like sand, and just stuff from Hawai'i —rocks, whatever, and take them home. And, of course, people that leave Hawai'i - I don't know how to say this. It's kind of like a myth that if you take anything from Hawai'i, you're going to have bad luck. It's kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy sometimes, because you think about things and say, "I've got to send this back."

Richard Powell: So, they always receive weird packages from all over the world, and they didn't know what to do. They didn't know how to — they didn't have any X-ray machines. But they didn't want to open every package, especially now, because you get packages from schools, no return address, wrapped strange. So, there was all kinds of processes where we had to figure out what are we going to do? We're going to take all of this and put it into a safe room, and then come up with some procedures for putting on all the personal protective equipment, including Tyvek whole body suit and everything, and put somebody in a respirator and go in and open up these packages, and that's basically what happened in some of these parks.

Richard Powell: So that's the type of information people were desperate to have, and we were trying to provide. They brought two other Public Health Service officers in to help with this information flow, because they have a lot of depth in that. And at that time, I had nobody on my staff who was dealing with occupational health. I do now. Actually, I hired a Public Health Service officer, an industrial hygienist, and so we have some depth in that now on my staff, but we didn't then.

Janet McDonnell: So, when you would get these inquiries from parks, you would put them in touch with those health officials to get guidance on how to handle those packages?

Richard Powell: Yes. And we also have our web site, and we were starting to put a lot of this on our web site, and advertising that web site, that here is a focal point. The Department - there was a lot of duplication of effort, which is fine. A lot of us were using the same sources. But one didn't know what the other one was putting on, so it was just a lot of information being put on our web sites. And we did it. We still have it, as a matter of fact.

Richard Powell: But people were desperate, very thirsty for information, and it was hard to coordinate. We finally did a lot better coordination with the Department, but they were doing a lot of their thing. Each bureau was doing our thing, and there was no central coordination for quite a while. Especially as it relates to dealing with mail in this building. They were doing their thing to deal with the mail, but we bureaus here, in the Main Interior and other locations in the Washington area, were having a hard time figuring out what they should do individually.

- Richard Powell: Like, for example, the mail ended up being delivered to offices, but we still didn't know what to do because it was hand delivered to these offices, and there were some of these envelopes that were questionable still there, until they stopped all mail and everything stopped.
- Richard Powell: But when the anthrax occurred and they were testing this building, I got a lot of calls from regions saying we want our mail rooms tested, too, because a lot of mail that comes through Brentwood to Main Interior goes then out to the field, and they didn't know what to do with this. And so, we were trying to give them some advice on that as well. And again, ultimately, all mail stopped. But our administrative support office in Reston wanted their mail tested, too, because they were receiving their mail indirectly through another post office from Brentwood and it would come up. So, we had to find some testing services that go out and test them, and that was very difficult because those services were absolutely overwhelmed in this area.
- Richard Powell: It was very difficult to get contractors to do this type of work, and reputable contractors. But we eventually came up with a list, and the industrial hygienists got together. And the facilities in the National Capital Region, they were calling me saying, "What are you guys doing?" and we were calling them saying, "What are you guys doing?" And their facilities were tested as well.
- Janet McDonnell: Were you getting inquiries from parks about other kinds of risks than anthrax? Were you getting calls of, we've got this —well, in this case, I suppose they would have gone to their local law enforcement?
- Richard Powell: Like other bioterrorist sort of things?
- Janet McDonnell: Right. Suspicious packages, vehicles, and how –
- Richard Powell: Right.
- Janet McDonnell: I guess I'm really curious as to know how, in general the process for getting the intelligence that you needed in order to pass on good information to parks. Where did you get your intelligence information from? What were your channels for that - the FBI? Where?
- Richard Powell: That's a very good question. That became a very frustrating thing for me because I didn't at that point have a security clearance. So, they, meaning the Department and others who had sensitive information that we were getting from the FBI, couldn't share it, or wouldn't share it.
- Richard Powell: I missed out on several meetings. We have a Park Police officer that's stationed just down the hall, and we talked extensively, because there was

a lot of information that I felt I needed to make a risk assessment and determine how we should be proceeding with securing safety for our employees such as other types of weapons of mass destruction, like biochemical, radiological weapons of mass destruction. And there was a meeting with the FBI — a couple of meetings, as a matter of fact, I couldn't go to because of that. I have since had myself cleared for a Top Secret — I have a Top-Secret clearance now. But at that time, I couldn't get that information, and I felt very inadequate to give good information about some of the stuff.

Richard Powell: We had quite a bit of information that came in from the web sites on weapons of mass destruction such as —

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START OF SIDE B

Richard Powell: —but we became educated a lot more about some of the potential. But we didn't have the intelligence to know what that potential might be. And so, we couldn't give much more information out about anybody's assessment of well, do they think there's something else that's coming. Or what should we do to prepare for anything else.

Richard Powell: So we started to give general information out by first of all giving information on web sites, and putting more on our web site, and hot linking to those other web sites so that people would - there's some great lists, some great information on these weapons of mass destruction. But it didn't give us the ability to analyze the potential, and that's where I really felt like I was put in a difficult position then because I was trying to advise the director and the director's office, and I think they became frustrated with me because I was trying to explain to them that I was trying to get in and talk to some people in the Department, and I did up to a point, especially about the mail and mail handling.

Richard Powell: But I couldn't with security, and she was meeting pretty regularly with others in the security community.

Janet McDonnell: She being Fran [Mainella]?

Richard Powell: Fran [Mainella], yes. And so, they had their regular morning meetings with our security people, law enforcement rangers, things like that, which I wasn't a part of, and in retrospect, maybe I should have been more assertive to be part of that. But I really, at that point, felt pretty left out. I was trying to provide good information to the field and to the employees here, but as far as what was happening downstairs, I wasn't part of that planning.

- Janet McDonnell: But do you think even the senior Park Service leaders even had enough good intelligence information? I guess I'm asking if, in general, you think that the Park Service needs a better interface with the intelligence community.
- Richard Powell: I think the Park Service had a pretty good interface with the intelligence community. But when you make that nexus between intelligence and safety and health, it didn't become apparent that there was a need for employee safety issues to be addressed, except for the security of this building and the evacuation of the building.
- Richard Powell: So, there were a number of issues that we have addressed relating to safety as well as security, and we didn't have the opportunity to do that. Ultimately, I think we did, and I became more accustomed to working with the Department. I was pretty naive about that, and I had been here for quite a while. Well, not quite a while. I got here in June of 1999, and I've worn this hat since January of 1996, out of Denver. So, I didn't have a lot of contacts except within the safety community in the Department. And I was then asked to go get into these other circles.
- Richard Powell: It was awkward. It was awkward for me because I didn't know who I was dealing with, and they didn't know me, and they were so busy trying to plan other things that it was difficult for me to get in the door. And again, that may have been because of my own naivete. But I think it was frustrating that I couldn't - but I think the front office, the Director's office was frustrated because I couldn't give them the type of information that I think they were looking for as far as how should we protect ourselves, what should we tell our employees other than what I could get through Public Health and through the web sites, and the industrial hygienists, and to some extent the security community folks that I was working with — ranger activities and park police.
- Richard Powell: Eventually, I was very much involved with that group because we were talking about occupational health, and about how we should prepare for the eventual potential other offenses that could happen.
- Richard Powell: I think we're positioned much better now, and again, we have more staff, and at that point, it was just a lack of concern, as I perceived it, for issues relating to employee health.
- Janet McDonnell: I've gotten the sense there was a lot of discussion about which parks, sites, monuments would be at greatest risk, the so-called icon parks - they use that term. Were you involved in helping - I mean, it sounds like that focuses on the site and not necessarily the employees at those sites. Is that the distinction you're making?

- Richard Powell: Yes. And there were similar frustrations out in the field —the regional safety managers and a lot of the park safety managers, because they were being asked questions, too. They were coming to me because they didn't have these health-related answers. But most of what was happening out there still with security and ranger activities, we were very involved in that, and in fact, we're very involved to this day in protecting dams and things, and it made a huge impact on the management of the parks because of all of these security issues that they were having to deal with.
- Richard Powell: But the safety folks out there weren't really too involved until anthrax. Anthrax put safety kind of in the light because the security people, as I said, didn't have any answers like that. So, we worked much closer then with the security folks, and law enforcement rangers to deal with that. But as far as actually protecting the icons, no. I wasn't involved at all.
- Janet McDonnell: You were trying in your own realm, it sounds like, to determine which employees at which parks might be at greatest risk, but that was a separate process from determining which sites themselves would be terrorist targets.
- Richard Powell: Exactly. I wasn't part of that planning, but just about every park, whether they were an icon park or not, wanted the answers of what do we do now, and how do we react if something else occurs. And they were looking for more information about the types of weapons of mass destruction that possibly could reach them out there, like smallpox, for example.
- Richard Powell: Smallpox was a very good example because nobody knew what was next, and smallpox is very bad stuff, and spreads very rapidly, and it spreads because you don't know you have it for a number of days. And that's the type of disease that they could have been confronted with, and no parks are really prepared for that. Nobody was. But actually, the security of the employees related more to everybody was saying okay, we want everybody to have a good evacuation plan. Well, in most parks they don't have buildings high enough to have an evacuation plan. But we started to advise them to do an assessment of the risk in their park, such as water systems, protecting the water supply, trying to assess what type of attacks could be made on those parks, potentially.
- Richard Powell: And so anyway, that's how we got involved, and we started working with ranger activities a lot more during that time.
- Janet McDonnell: How about coordination with the U.S. Park Police? Did you do much coordination with them?

- Richard Powell: I did quite a bit because - yes, and that was through Van Horn. Gary Van Horn was very helpful. He was the one that was asking me to come to some of these meetings and realizing that I couldn't because of the lack of security clearance. But he was giving me as much information as he could during that time. He was very helpful. Very helpful, especially as it relates to the questions about what next in the potential.
- Richard Powell: Of course, nobody really knew anything. The FBI didn't know anything. The FBI may have had some suspicions about where this was coming from, and what type of communities or people in the United States could potentially be involved in this, but they didn't know, and still to this day we don't know where the anthrax came from. And so, the potential of having home grown terrorism, the militia type of terrorism, was very great. And this is where a lot of the parks were really concerned, because they didn't know if the anthrax was from a local militia group, or some other group that's internal, that didn't relate to the Taliban or al Qaeda. And so they were looking over their shoulder a lot or anticipating that maybe there might be some terrorist attacks kind of opportunistically as a result of, you know, well, let's just do something now and maybe we can make it look like the bad guys over there are doing it. So, they were looking at potentials in parks, very much.
- Janet McDonnell: It occurred to me that even if you had had the security classification that you needed at the time, wouldn't it still have been difficult to pass that information on to the parks without - you had no secured communications system?
- Richard Powell: That's right.
- Janet McDonnell: No secured phone lines or anything like that?
- Richard Powell: That's exactly right. But we probably could have done a better job if I had been privy to some information, and I could have advised the director, and the directorate could have made some decisions and given some information to the superintendents of the parks out there. Maybe and maybe not. I don't want to overplay the fact that I didn't have a security clearance, because maybe there wasn't all that much information. I mean, Tom Ridge's Homeland Defense group wasn't even formed at that time. There were shadows of that that were formed, but there was no organization to deal with the internal security other than the FBI, and probably the CIA, and half the time I understand they don't talk a lot. They're talking a lot more now.
- Richard Powell: So there may not have been a lot of information that I could have been privy to, but there were meetings where they were talking about things and what we need to protect ourselves, that they didn't want to get out to the

bad guys, and that's the type of security, I think, that they were really concerned about, or the what-ifs that could go on ad nauseum. But what if, what if, what if, and that's the FBI's business to say what if, and how are we going to prepare for it. And without a security clearance, they weren't sure who to trust. They didn't know who to trust, and rightfully so. I understand that, and that's why you have security clearance.

Richard Powell: But you're absolutely right, when you get that information, how are you going to actually use it? And there's ways of using the information to prepare, rather than sharing the information.

Janet McDonnell: That's true. Well, as I understand it, when that Type-1 Team came in, they did a study of security at the G Street facility, at North Capitol, and I presume here at Main Interior. Did you work with them on that? I mean, that was employee safety and security.

Richard Powell: Yes, primarily, and I was working with them on that.

Janet McDonnell: And how well did that work?

Richard Powell: The Department had those plans that I mentioned in preparation for the protests. So how to guard the entrances and things like that just kind of fell into place real fast. But there weren't the same security measures in 800 North Capitol, G Street, and some of the other offices around here, and so there was an assessment of that, too. And, of course, all federal buildings then started to button up, and there was much more security. But at that point, there was not a lot of security, and this group was evaluating. I didn't go to every building. I was dealing with this building. But there were so many things already in place in this building that there wasn't a lot to do.

Richard Powell: They did an assessment. But the big assessment that we were concerned about is G Street.

Janet McDonnell: The employees never went back in there, right? After September 11, it was decided not to use the G Street office any longer, is that correct?

Richard Powell: What happened - in fact, I think I've got my sequence a little off because after 9/11 - that's interesting, because they started to move back. They were moving back into the office after 9/11. They continued to move into the office after 9/11 until following the - probably it was - and we had meetings with the building manager after 9/11. And it was the day that we had the meeting with the building manager and all the occupants that the White House decided that they were going to take over our space. And so that forced everybody to move out, and they did.

Janet McDonnell: So, it wasn't security issues so much at that point because you'd addressed those?

Richard Powell: They were really convinced that the White House was going to be a target and could well have been because of the plane that either went down in Pennsylvania, or perhaps the plane that hit the Pentagon, and might have been headed to the White House. And so, they wanted to get their employees out of the White House area, and the employees that took over our building on G Street, our floors, were from the old Executive Office Building, and they kept everything.

Janet McDonnell: It sounds like employees, security, and safety is much more at the forefront in the thinking of the agency leaders now. Is that your sense?

Richard Powell: No.

Janet McDonnell: No?

Richard Powell: Security is. Safety and health, it's a struggle. Let's go off the record.

[tape interruption]

Richard Powell: As a result of this, everybody —there were meetings canceled right and left. I was scheduled to go down to FLETC and to present to each of the classes down there a session of employee safety and health, primarily focused on rangers and officers survival and stuff like that. And I canceled the trip down there because I felt very uncomfortable. I do a lot of traveling, and some people could just get past it and not worry about it, but we canceled. Not only did I cancel the trip, but there were a lot of meetings that were scheduled that were canceled.

Richard Powell: And suddenly in January I was gone the entire month getting caught up, January and April both. It has been an extremely busy month, but it was like things were at a standstill. We would - all of us, and you have probably heard this before, but I experienced a very, very strange sort of - I'm not sure if you call it - it was a psychological - it's not like a depression, but it was - we were all sitting at our desks for a number of days, not really being able to work at all. Everything seemed meaningless. All the stuff you do from day to day, or planning for an event, or a conference, or a meeting all just seemed so irrelevant, and it was - all of us felt the same way. I don't think I talked to anybody that didn't feel that way, especially along this hallway, and the other people. It was just like there was almost a paralysis that occurred.

Richard Powell: It's hard to get out of that and start to kind of shake it off. I have heard from psychologists that that's not an unusual thing to happen, but it very

definitely did. Getting back to business was really difficult for all of us, but we did, obviously we did.

Janet McDonnell: Is there anything out of all of this that you are particularly proud of, or that you thought worked particularly well?

Richard Powell: I think the thing that worked well is when — I work closely anyway with Public Health Service. They have a lot of depth, and that's why I hired a Public Health Service industrial hygienist, because of that, and it worked really well that they were able to bring some folks in.

Richard Powell: John Handley [?] was very good. I went to him and said, "Look, I don't have people on my staff. Is there anybody you have?" I knew several of his officers out in the regions. He brought two of them, his best guys, brought them in, and that, I think, worked really well, because we worked really well together to provide the depth relating to all of the questions, especially relating to anthrax. I think it worked really well.

Janet McDonnell: As far as I know, there were no Park Service employees who were injured as a result of either the original attacks in New York City and the Pentagon, or with the anthrax scare?

Richard Powell: No. I am not aware that there were any Park Service people that were injured or affected in any way like that.

Janet McDonnell: The document I handed you, I just wondered if you would talk a minute about the incident tracking system that it refers to.

Richard Powell: The Case Incident Reporting System serves the National Park Service. It was established primarily for ranger activities as an incident reporting system. It's kind of like an electronic 10343 form, and it was never well funded, and it can be electronically, technologically updated very fast. It is not web based or anything. And when it was formed, no other activities in the National Park Service who would like to have been part of that system were not included, including employee safety and health. And it was apparent for a long time that it's not working for the Park Service.

Richard Powell: I complained about that one time, and Maureen's staff met, and I brought the issue up that we needed an incident reporting system for the National Park Service. She tasked me with making that happen.

Janet McDonnell: This is Maureen—?

Richard Powell: Maureen Finnerty. She was the Associate Director for Health, Operations, and Education. Now she's down in Florida. Maureen Finnerty.

- Richard Powell: And so after a considerable amount of struggle to get funded to do the first phase of this, which is a needs assessment, and then the contract to actually go out and search the market for a product that would meet those needs, we retained TRW, and right now I'm the project manager on that. But what we desire is a system, and this is one of the things that the IECF report brought up. One of the serious weaknesses the National Park Service has in law enforcement is it doesn't have a good system nationally or locally of rolling up these incidents, public incidents, or law enforcement or whatever. And, of course, there's a whole list — cultural and natural resources, they didn't have, and there is a need for that.
- Richard Powell: So, I brought a steering committee together representing each of those disciplines, and we finally got it funded, and it was the consensus that we really needed it. We needed that buy-in, and I'm not going to do it alone. And, in fact, I'm the project manager right now, but we really need a full-time project manager. It is a huge undertaking, and I'm in the process of trying to get somebody - get Dick Ring to establish a project manager for this. Hopefully, that will happen.
- Richard Powell: But we want a system that is going to capture all incidents, any kind of information that people want, not just law enforcement, but the Park Police is part of it, ranger activities, fire, wildland fires, structural fire, and we need safety and health, and so that we can capture the information and analyze it.
- Richard Powell: It's always frequently that we get called for information from the Hill and other places, and we embarrass ourselves because we don't have this information. It's very clear that we need it. So that's what this system is about.
- Janet McDonnell: Did September 11 give an added boost to this initiative?
- Richard Powell: It did. I refer to that, in fact, that since September 11 there's been a lot of questions asked about incidents in the parks, and we don't have that to give.
- Janet McDonnell: Is there anything that I haven't asked about that you think is important to get into the record?
- Richard Powell: No. Where we are right now is, I have - Public Health Service is trying to establish some more depth as far as terrorism, and, of course, I have my industrial hygienist on staff, and he is definite now. So, what we are trying to do is to gear up for getting more information out and doing some coordinating with ranger activities for any eventuality that we might encounter. We try to prepare for a response to that. It's very difficult to do, but —

- Janet McDonnell: First of all, have you had a role in planning for the 12th & Eye Street move, and employee safety and security there?
- Richard Powell: I've had some role in that. There's been a number of people asking what the security is. Maureen Foster is working in that area, and it is recognized that there are some security issues there, too.
- Janet McDonnell: So, I guess my question is have you benefited from your experience, post-September 11, with the G Street facility and here at Main Interior, in the way you look at 12th and Eye?
- Richard Powell: Yes. So, does everybody else, and I think it's - we're starting to look at it from the standpoint of evacuation, the standpoint of building security especially. There are still some evacuation issues because we're quite high up there, and we evacuate like anybody else. We go down the stairs.
- Richard Powell: But yes, I think we've learned a lot, and we're learning as we go still. We're learning about how to prepare for situations like this, and starting to look at what could possibly happen, and what are you going to do if it does, radiologically or otherwise, you know.
- Janet McDonnell: Overall, what kind of marks would you give the Park Service for its response, again looking at it from your realm, from your perspective?
- Richard Powell: I would give the Park Service pretty high marks for how we responded, and how we eventually communicated with our people. I think we took a leadership role in that, both in communication and also in the organization.
- Richard Powell: I would like to have seen more concern for employee safety sooner, and to see risk management integrated into planning and meetings, things like that.
- Janet McDonnell: This seems like an appropriate place to stop.

END OF TAPE