



Stranded San Francisco Airport passengers wait in a long line at a Budget car rental counter Tuesday in downtown San Francisco. With airline service suspended Tuesday, many travelers were looking to rental cars and other options to get to their destinations.

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS — MERCURY NEWS

Bus, car-rental firms expect surge in business

By Tracey Kaplan and Truong Phuoc Khanh
Mercury News

With airports shut down nationwide Tuesday, bus, train and car-rental companies braced for a surge in passengers searching for an alternate way to travel.

"We're going to see weeks of reduced travelability from the airports," said Russell Henk of the Texas Transportation Institute, a leading think tank. "That will be a stress on trains, car rentals and buses like we've never seen, particularly back East."

Even when airline service returns to normal, some travelers may stay away.

Bay Area passengers who opted for buses, trains and cars Tuesday seemed motivated more by a fear of flying than by a burning desire to get to their destination.

"I'm through with flying for a while," said Mattie Harris, standing in line at San Jose's Greyhound station Tuesday waiting to take a two-day bus ride to Oklahoma City.

TRAVEL ALTERNATIVES: GREYHOUND, AMTRAK READY TO ADD MORE TRIPS IF PASSENGER DEMAND SOARS

David Keffer, a Houston executive who has flown more than 2 million miles, said that instead of flying, he will spend two days driving with a complete stranger referred by a car-rental agency.

"I'll drive 2,000 miles rather than go through a security system that hasn't had adequate time to improve," he said.

Tuesday, Greyhound closed 30 of its 2,600 terminals located near federal buildings or housed in other possible targets, such as New York's Port Authority. Three California stations closed — Sacramento, East Los Angeles and San Diego. The firm was still running buses out of those cities, but from alternate locations.

The nation's largest bus line didn't see a significant increase in travelers

Tuesday, a Greyhound spokeswoman said. But its phone lines were jammed with calls from people who wanted information about schedules and fares.

"We've got extra drivers and buses on alert that can be put into service, just like with a major holiday," Kristin Parsley said.

Amtrak shut down all service Tuesday immediately after the disaster to inspect some trains and rail lines. But the company, which transports 60,000 people a day on 230 trains, resumed running within a few hours to all stations, including New York.

Spokesman Rick Remington said Amtrak is planning to run a normal schedule today, but will be ready to add cars if demand warrants.

Intel, which flies employees daily from San Jose to Sacramento, also was grounded and chartered a bus.

Newlyweds Eric and Laurie Forinash, both St. Louis pharmacists honeymooning in the Bay Area, also were hitting the road. They couldn't wait.



LEN VAUGHN-LAHMAN — MERCURY NEWS

John R. Choate, left, and Dr. T.K. Do call to try to find an alternate travel option. The two Pemstar employees were stranded at San Jose Airport.

Escrow on their new house was closing. The prospect of spending 34 hours together in a minivan was daunting. They'd never been in a car together longer than four hours.

"It's going to be a good test," Laurie Forinash said.

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Bay Area hospitals put in crisis mode

HEALTH FACILITIES ON ALERT, GEAR UP FOR CALL TO HELP

By Barbara Feder
Mercury News

As New York and Washington, D.C., hospitals struggled valiantly to treat the victims of Tuesday's national catastrophe, their counterparts around the Bay Area and the rest of the country dusted off their emergency preparedness plans, beefed up security and assessed their blood and medical supplies.

After that, they could do little more than watch and wait, and offer help.

Every hospital in the Bay Area, with disaster plans honed though earthquake readiness and Y2K drills, was on heightened security Tuesday, many posting extra guards and some restricting entrances and exits to critical medical buildings.

At 7:45 a.m. Tuesday, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center received a bomb threat that forced the evacuation of some of its peripheral buildings but not the main hospital. Administrative workers were sent home while sheriff's dep-

U.S. Centers for Disease Control warned could happen after any terrorist attack.

All hospitals maintain disaster preparedness plans and regularly drill workers. But with a catastrophe of this magnitude, hospital officials say, planning can only go so far. New York hospitals, for example, contended with a fog of ash and soot that compromised patients' wounds. Medical evacuation helicopters were temporarily grounded, an unforeseen circumstance when air travel was banned. And who would have expected that a major hospital in New York would use Polaroid instant cameras to photograph the dead and injured, to hasten identification?

"No one is prepared for something on this scale," said Laura Marshall, a spokeswoman for Kaiser Permanente. "It's so rare that you can't possibly be ready for it."

But hospitals are trying. At Stanford University Medical Center, which has an advanced trauma center, officials maintain a volunteer network of ham radio operators and a backup telephone system if regular telephone lines are out, said Per Schenck, disaster preparedness coordinator. The hospital has set up programs to take care of psychiatric patients who may have nothing physically wrong with them and would send staff members home for respite to avoid burnout.

Hospitals prepare differently for various types of disasters. Burns, cuts and crushing injuries are likely in a building collapse or bombing, Schenck said. Patients will not swamp a hospital en masse in a disaster, but will trickle in, some walking, some brought in by cabs, the more seriously injured by ambulance and helicopter.

Leslie Kelsay, spokeswoman for the Regional Medical Center of San Jose and San Jose Medical Center, described a New York hospital using gurneys, then hospital beds, then wheelchairs, then finally office chairs to receive patients Tuesday as every other method ran out.

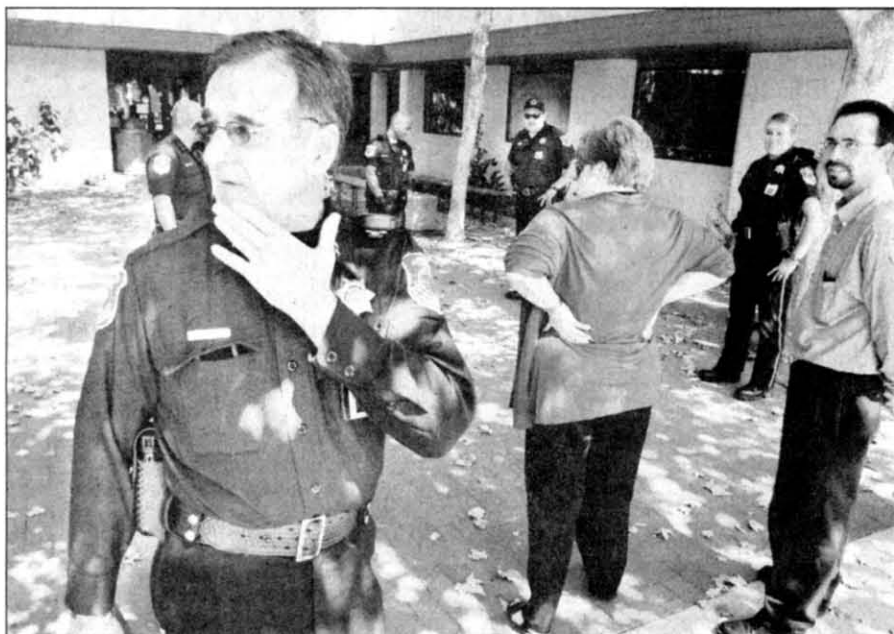
"What health care workers do in a situation like this is truly heroic," she said.

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JUDITH CALSON — MERCURY NEWS

Officer Victor Reyes of the Santa Clara County Protective Services performs a security check following a bomb threat at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, above. Below, Protective Services Chief Mark Mooring prepares to check out the VMC Central Mental Health Center as workers are evacuated.



Locals rush to buy goods

MANY CUSTOMERS STOCK UP ON FOOD; OTHERS, GAS MASKS

By Michael Bazeley
and Mark Schwarhauser
Mercury News

It wasn't like the mad rush to survival stores that preceded Y2K, but many Bay Area residents scurried to buy emergency supplies Tuesday, fearful the East Coast terrorist attacks might somehow disrupt West Coast services.

Many stores saw a run on canned goods, water, batteries and even gas masks. Lines at automated teller machines were longer than usual. And some gun shops reported strong sales of ammunition.

At a Safeway in suburban Pleasanton — miles from any logical terrorist targets — the demand for water was so high, a water-refilling machine had been drained dry, and half the shelves were empty by midday. Lines at the two bank branches inside the store had been steady all day.

Kathryn Groves, 27, said the attacks spurred her to assemble emergency supplies because she just gave birth to a daughter — and didn't want to risk being unable to nurse if her family ran out of food.

"I figured there'd either be a run on water or I'd be the only paranoid nut," Groves said. "We don't even live in a city. Look where we are — Pleasanton, 40 or 50 miles from San Francisco."

Safeway spokeswoman Debra Lambert reported an only slight increase in sales of emergency goods, saying

"You know, just in case — kind of a knee-jerk reaction."

— MANNY BELLO, OWNER OF A SAN FRANCISCO MILITARY SURPLUS STORE, EXPLAINING WHY CUSTOMERS WERE RUSHING TO BUY GAS MASKS

stockpiling was "mild" compared with the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989.

Jean Chen, a Saratoga mother of three who works at Bea Systems, did her regular shopping at Costco in Santa Clara on Tuesday, but said the morning's events prompted her to buy a few extra things — a solar-powered radio and flashlight, plus some extra canned food.

San Francisco's few military surplus stores that carry gas masks reported brisk sales.

Manny Bello, manager of California Surplus on Haight Street, said he'd sold about 10 gas masks by early Tuesday, more than they usually sell on a weekday. Most of the purchasers, people in their 20s and early 30s, were buying them in reaction to the attack, he said. "You know, just in case — kind of a knee-jerk reaction."

A few Bay Area gun shops reported a jump in ammunition sales, but the majority said they'd seen nothing unusual. Big 5 Sporting Goods in Fremont opened at 10 a.m.

"As soon as we opened up, four people came right away," said assistant store manager Carol Garrison.

Like the managers of Target Masters Gun Range in Milpitas and the Old West Gun Room in El Cerrito, who also had customers in to buy ammo, Garrison said they were all new buyers, not regular customers. She said one customer said he was buying ammunition because "we don't know what's going on, so I'm just getting prepared."

Mercury News Staff writers Sue McAllister, Robin Evans and Matthai Chakko Kuruvila contributed to this report.

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