

## **Many New York 9/11 Workers, Residents Still Sick**

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Unsigned

Nearly seven years after the terrorist attacks that demolished the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, many people exposed to the dust, smoke and chemical fumes released into the environment by the airplane strikes on the twin towers continue to experience illnesses.

Rescue and recovery workers, residents of Lower Manhattan, and area workers are still suffering physical and mental health problems related to 9/11 exposure, according to the first report of the WTC Medical Working Group, released today by Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

After reviewing more than 100 scientific articles published since 2001, the group of physicians and researchers found that thousands of people have been treated for physical and mental health problems. But more people still need medical help, so the mayor today launched a citywide publicity campaign to promote awareness of medical and mental health treatment options for those who are still suffering.

"We have answered the call for help from those who have suffered health problems as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack," said Mayor Bloomberg. "We're helping people heal, both physically and emotionally, and we will continue to reach out to those in need."

In the aftermath of 9/11, respiratory symptoms were common among people who breathed in the contaminants released by the collapse of the World Trade Center, the WTC Medical Working Group reports.

Respiratory symptoms have subsided over time for many, but have persisted for some including firefighters, 25 percent of whom had symptoms two to four years after the event. Lung function also has declined among some workers.

In surveys conducted two to three years after 9/11, rescue and recovery workers, Lower Manhattan residents and area workers developed new cases of asthma at two to three times the expected rate.

Studies on cancer risk or increased risk of death are underway, but the results are not yet available because of long latency periods of many potentially fatal diseases.

The new \$5 million citywide advertising and grassroots marketing campaign will debut on subways, print, radio, and television next week. The campaign, which will run in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Polish, urges the public to seek care for 9/11-related health problems with its tagline, "Lived There? Worked There? You Deserve Care."

The campaign directs New Yorkers to the WTC Environmental Health Center or to dial 311 for help.

"Many New Yorkers are suffering from wheezing, shortness of breath, stomach and other medical or emotional problems related to their 9/11 exposure and its aftermath. Yet too many don't connect their continuing health problems to 9/11 or believe that help is only available to WTC rescue and recovery workers," said Alan Aviles, who heads the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation.

"This awareness campaign - devised collaboratively with concerned community organizations - has been designed to get people to the health care they need," Aviles said. "

"We hope it will resonate deeply with those potentially affected - families who lived and stayed in their downtown homes, young people who went to school in the area, local business owners who kept their shops open, local office workers who commute from many parts of the city and the region, clean-up workers who cleared dust from nearby offices, and those who still struggle with the psychological and emotional trauma of losing a loved one or witnessing the horrific devastation," he said.

"The World Trade Center Medical Working Group Report represents remarkable consensus among scientists, doctors, and experts on what the research tells us about 9/11 health problems," said Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, who co-chaired the group. "Our objective review will inform the city's ongoing commitment to targeting resources and research where they are needed and ensure that those affected receive the treatment they deserve."

Mayor Bloomberg is appealing to the federal government for more funding to support the research and treatment already underway. "We will keep fighting for the support these critically important programs deserve," he said.

The city has secured more than \$108 million from Congress for fiscal year 2008, including first time funding for community members and area workers suffering from 9/11 health problems.

"This was gained with crucial support from members of the New York delegation, labor leaders, members of the community, and local health and environmental organizations," the mayor said.

City actions also prompted the release of \$30 million of these funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide services for residents, workers and students.

"The city has not waited to get treatment to those who are sick because of the 9/11 attacks, but the federal government must make the long-term investments necessary to ensure that we can continue to conduct vital research and treat those who are sick or who could become sick," said Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler. "To accomplish that, Congress must pass the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2008."

The 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2008 would provide a consistent funding stream for 9/11-related treatment and the re-opening of the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund.

The City of New York has committed \$100 million in funds over five years for the 9/11-related health agenda.

The mayor said today that all 15 of the recommendations laid out in the city's 2007 report, "Addressing the Health Impacts of 9/11" have been completed or are underway. Among those efforts:

Treatment services have been expanded at Bellevue Hospital, Elmhurst Hospital Center and Gouverneur Healthcare Services, where more than 2,800 New Yorkers have been treated for 9/11-related problems.

More than 1,000 New Yorkers have been enrolled in a new financial reimbursement program for people receiving 9/11-related mental health services.

Medical treatment guidelines for treating people exposed to 9/11 contaminants have been distributed to 40,000 health professionals, and health information has been sent regularly to more than 5,000 residents and city employees.

A comprehensive website for 9/11 health information and service listings has been established, and the site has had more than 300,000 visits to date.

"Help is available for people still suffering," said New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Tom Frieden, co-chair of the World Trade Center Medical Working Group.

"Any New Yorker can call 311 or visit the 9/11 health website at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) to find information about treatment for a physical ailment or a mental health problem, he said."Both post traumatic stress disorder and respiratory conditions are still common among those directly exposed. Treatment can help, so please seek care if you're suffering."