

# FROM THE GROUND UP

ISSUE # 1

Dear 9/11 Immigrant Worker:

**Did your work at or around Ground Zero affect your health in any way?**

When the World Trade Center towers collapsed, many toxic materials were present, and caused **health problems** for many of the clean-up workers and others who were exposed to these hazardous materials. In addition, the **psychological effects** for those affected by such an enormous disaster are a concern not only for the workers, but for their families and their communities as well.

If you worked at Ground Zero, it is important to try to **take care of any health problems** that you may have as a result of your 9/11 clean-up work. In addition, it is important to get a **screening exam** because even if you are not sick now, there is concern that some health effects associated with working at Ground Zero **may take years** before they could actually make people sick.

**Why is there concern?**

The **dust and ash** anywhere in the vicinity of the World Trade Center were likely to contain asbestos, cement, drywall and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) combustion products, among others. Cement dust usually contains silica, which can cause lung diseases. PVC, or other airborne particles of burned plastics from insulation or furniture, may cause lung irritation, and can worsen asthma and/or chronic bronchitis. In addition, exposure to asbestos can cause lung diseases. **Other dusts and gases** present at Ground Zero could have caused respiratory problems; they could also cause eye irritation or allergic skin reactions.

In addition to the **extreme physical conditions**, the **mental and emotional stress** from being involved in responding to this disaster has led to psychological symptoms for many of the workers.

## HEALTH EFFECTS RELATED TO 9/11 RESCUE, RECOVERY AND CLEAN-UP

The **World Trade Center Medical Monitoring Program** has conducted screening examinations for thousands of workers who were involved in the 9/11 clean-up. Some of the health effects identified at this time are:

### 1. Respiratory problems

**Rhinitis, Sinusitis, Laryngitis, Bronchitis, RADS (Reactive Airways Disease Syndrome); Asthma**

Some of the symptoms identified for these illnesses include:

- nasal congestion and soreness, discharge, itching and burning
- facial or tooth pain, swelling, headache
- throat pain or burning, cough, hoarse voice, wheezing, shortness of breath
- strong reactions to smoke, auto exhaust, cold air and cleaning agents

### 2. Gastric problems

- difficulty with certain foods
- chronic indigestion
- burning sensation in the chest

## **Psychological Symptoms:**

**depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder**

Some symptoms include:

- panic attacks
- difficulty sleeping
- nightmares
- increased use of alcohol, drugs and/or tobacco
- extreme exhaustion
- irritability and feeling detached from family and friends
- sadness
- marital problems

If you have any of these problems since your 9/11-related work, or these problems have worsened since then, you should **take action now to protect your health.**

## **STEPS YOU CAN TAKE**

Here are some first steps you can take to get your health needs met.

**1. SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER MEDICAL MONITORING PROGRAM.** This program offers **free** and **confidential** medical screening examinations to workers who were working on rescue, recovery, restoration of vital services, and clean-up activities at Ground Zero. **Call 1-800-702-0630** to schedule an appointment for a medical screening. If the doctor you see determines that you have a 9/11-related health problem that needs further treatment, they will work with you to refer you to a doctor who can continue to treat you. **(Immigration status doesn't matter.)**

**2. EVEN IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS NOW, IT'S IMPORTANT TO GET THE BASELINE EXAMINATION.** Unfortunately, we don't know what, if any **long-term health effects** will occur for 9/11 workers. Getting the medical exam now will give you a better chance to be eligible for additional medical screening programs in the coming years, if needed. The WTC Medical Monitoring Program is already seeing some patients for a second time, and has received continued funding to conduct those exams. They can also help you to apply for benefits that are available for 9/11 workers.

**3. FIND OUT WHAT OTHER BENEFITS MAY BE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST YOU IN DEALING WITH YOUR 9/11-RELATED ISSUES.** Many programs still exist that offer assistance to workers who were affected by 9/11. Mental health and counseling services are available for both the workers and their families if affected. **In addition, some financial assistance for some cases is available.** For any financial assistance, **you need to work with a case manager** to help you figure out if you are eligible. See *From the Ground Up* Issue #4, "Programs and Services for 9/11 Immigrant Clean-up Workers", for more information.

**4. JOIN NYCOSH'S 9/11 IMMIGRANT WORKER COUNCIL.** What we've learned, from 9/11 and before that, is that workers' health and safety issues get more attention when workers join together and fight to have their voices heard. Many immigrant workers involved in the clean-up efforts may feel alone and powerless to act. **By joining with other workers, these issues can be given more attention in an effort to meet the needs of these workers.** Call (212) 227-6440, ext. 18 to join the 9/11 Immigrant Worker Council.

The New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH)

New York Office: 116 John Street, Suite 604, New York, NY 10038

(212) 227-6440, ext. 18

LI Office: c/o NYSUT, 150 Motor Parkway, Suite 306, Hauppauge, NY 11788

(631) 435-1857



THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY A SEPTEMBER 11 RECOVERY GRANT FROM  
THE AMERICAN RED CROSS LIBERTY DISASTER RELIEF FUND