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EPA AND OSHA Web Sites Provide Environmental Monitoring Data From World Trade Center and Surrounding Areas

**Data Confirms No Significant Public Health Risks;
Rescue Crews and Nearby Residents Should Take Appropriate Precautions**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Christie Whitman and US Department of Labor Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) John Henshaw announced today that both federal agencies are providing the public with extensive additional environmental monitoring data from the World Trade Center site and nearby areas in Manhattan, Brooklyn and New Jersey. Both agencies have taken hundreds of samples to monitor environmental conditions since September 11, and have found no evidence of any significant public health hazard to residents, visitors or workers beyond the immediate World Trade Center area.

In response to public requests for more detailed information, EPA and OSHA are making the results of environmental and occupational sampling available on their sites on the World Wide Web (www.epa.gov and www.osha.gov), and will post additional data as it becomes available.

EPA and OSHA, working closely with other federal, state, and local agencies, have been sampling the air, dust, water, river sediments and drinking water and analyzing them for the presence of pollutants such as asbestos, radiation, mercury and other metals, pesticides, PCBs, or bacteria that might create health hazards. They have found no evidence of any significant public health hazard to residents or visitors to the New York metropolitan area.

"EPA's website now has more detailed information on environmental monitoring information in New York City that should be very reassuring to residents, tourists and workers, and we will continue to update that site with information as it becomes available" said EPA Administrator Whitman. "Our data show that contaminant levels are low or nonexistent, and are generally confined to the Trade Center site. There is no need for concern among the general public, but residents and business owners should follow recommended procedures for cleaning up homes and businesses if dust has entered."

OSHA Administrator John Henshaw confirmed that workers on the site should take appropriate steps to protect themselves, but there is no threat to public health. "We have more than 200 staffers involved in a round-the-clock effort, continually monitoring conditions to ensure the safety and health of workers," Administrator Henshaw said. "It is important for workers involved in the recovery and clean-up to wear protective equipment as potential hazards and conditions are constantly changing at the site; however, our samples indicate there is no evidence of significant levels of airborne asbestos or other contaminants beyond the disaster site itself."

On the whole, despite questions about potential contaminants from the Trade Center site, EPA and OSHA data indicates there is no cause for general public concern. Residents and workers returning to buildings where dust from the Trade Center has entered the building should follow proper procedures in cleaning buildings, but the general public should feel very reassured about the extensive

environmental monitoring data that has been collected and analyzed. Rescue and recovery crews working on the Trade Center site should take steps to protect themselves from potential exposure to contaminants by using respirators and washing stations as recommended by EPA and OSHA.

In total, EPA and OSHA have taken 835 ambient air samples in the New York City metropolitan area. EPA is currently collecting data from 16 fixed air monitors at ground zero and in the residential and business districts around the site, and both EPA and OSHA are using portable sampling equipment to collect data from a range of locations throughout the area.

Out of a total of 442 air samples EPA has taken at ground zero and in the immediate area, only 27 had levels of asbestos above the standard EPA uses to determine if children can re-enter a school after asbestos has been removed – a stringent standard based upon assumptions of long-term exposure. OSHA has analyzed 67 air samples from the same area, and all were below the OSHA workplace standard for asbestos.

All fifty-four air samples from EPA's four monitors in New Jersey found no levels above EPA's standard. Another 162 samples were taken from EPA's monitors at the Fresh Kills landfill in Staten Island, where debris from the World Trade Center is being taken; only two exceeded EPA's standard.

Of 177 bulk dust and debris samples collected by EPA and OSHA and analyzed for asbestos, 48 had levels over 1 percent, the level EPA and OSHA use to define asbestos-containing material. Although early samples from water runoff into the Hudson and East Rivers showed some elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxin, asbestos and metals, recent results find non-detectable levels of asbestos, and PCBs and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and metals below the level of concern.

EPA and OSHA have also conducted sampling for the presence of metals (lead, iron oxide, zinc oxide, copper and beryllium) at ground zero and in surrounding areas. None of the levels of these metals have exceeded OSHA limits.

Although EPA has measured dioxin levels in and around the World Trade Center site that were at or above EPA's level for taking action, the risk from dioxin is based on long-term exposure. EPA and OSHA expect levels to diminish as soon as the remaining fires on the site are extinguished.

Of the 36 samples of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) taken around ground zero to assist response workers in determining the appropriate level of respiratory protection, several samples have been above the OSHA standard for workers. None presented an immediate risk to workers, and the levels are expected to decline when the fires are out.

Fact sheets with more specific information for various parts of the New York City metropolitan area are available:

Environmental Information from Ground Zero at the World Trade Center Site
Environmental Information from Lower Manhattan for Residents, Area
Employees and Local Business Owners
Other Environmental Issues Related to the Attack on the World Trade Center

Resources for Information on the World Wide Web:

US Environmental Protection Agency
US Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration
New York City Department of Health
US Department of Health and Human Services
New York State Emergency Management Office

In the News - Headlines

wysiwyg://3/http://www.epa.gov/epahome/data_summary.htm

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