



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Response to September 11

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September 18, 2001

Frequently Asked Environmental and Public Health Questions about the World Trade Center and Pentagon Tragedies

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What substances is EPA testing for at the WTC and Pentagon?

EPA is monitoring for asbestos and particulates (dust) and other contaminants typically found in large building fire and collapse situations.

What has EPA's testing shown so far?

EPA's air monitoring near the WTC has not detected any pollutants from the fire and building collapses that are of concern to the general public. Within the restricted zone (within one block of the WTC), EPA is finding low levels of asbestos in the dust from the building collapse. At the Pentagon, EPA monitoring has found either no asbestos or levels well below the level of concern. For more information on asbestos, click here:

(<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2001pres/20010916a.html>) [EXIT disclaimer >](#)

What is being done to control the dust in the WTC restricted area and protect the rescue and cleanup workers?

EPA and OSHA are advising rescue and cleanup workers on dust control measures, such as wetting down the debris to keep dust from getting into the air. EPA also is operating 10 high efficiency vacuum trucks to remove dust in residential and business areas near the WTC. EPA has advised the workers in the restricted area to wear respirators to protect themselves from the dust and any asbestos it may contain. For more information on dust and debris click here:

(<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2001pres/20010916b.html>) [EXIT disclaimer >](#)

Do persons outside the WTC restricted area need to wear respirators?

No. EPA has not detected any pollutant levels of concern in Lower Manhattan generally or at the Fresh Kills site on Staten Island, where the debris from the WTC cleanup is being taken for inspection and sorting.

Is EPA still testing the air for pollutants and how long will it continue to test?

EPA, other federal agencies and state and city agencies continue sampling and reviewing and analyzing data collected. EPA will continue its monitoring as long as required. To view the latest air quality data for the state of New York click here: (<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dar/bts/airmon/sitepage2.htm>) 

Was there any contamination of drinking water as a result of the WTC and Pentagon fires and collapses?

No, there isn't any indication at either site of drinking water contamination. In New York City, the City Department of Environmental Protection and EPA are jointly testing the drinking water at sites within the distribution system. At the Pentagon, all of the runoff is routed to a sewage treatment facility before discharge into the Potomac River. In addition, there are no drinking water intakes downstream of the Pentagon on the Potomac.

What is being done to protect the nation's drinking water?

The water supplies in the United States are among the safest in the world and the threat of mass contamination is small. EPA works with public and private water suppliers and their national organizations to safeguard America's drinking water. All water suppliers have emergency contingency plans. In the unlikely event of a terrorist act, the plans typically call for shutting down the water supply system, notifying the public through the mass media, providing an alternate source of drinking water or providing consumers with information on how to treat the water to make it safe, such as boiling. For more information on drinking water safety click here: (<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/security/secqanda.html>)

EPA information about the events of September 11

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