

New York City DEP Building Owner Instructions



Department of Environmental Protection

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Dear Residents of Lower Manhattan:

Since September 11th, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), NYC Department of Health (DOH), and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), have been taking samples of the air, dust, water, river sediments and drinking water and analyzing them for the presence of pollutants. The samples are evaluated against a variety of benchmarks, standards and guidelines established to protect public health under various conditions. These agencies consider the amount of time a person is exposed to a particular pollutant and where—a school, workplace or home—in creating these criteria.

The following is a description of some of the benchmarks, standards and guidelines these agencies are using to evaluate environmental conditions in the aftermath of the World Trade Center disaster.

Asbestos in the Air / in Open Spaces

EPA is requiring the strictest protective standard under AHERA, the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, for asbestos in outdoor and indoor areas. (This standard is used to determine whether children may reenter a school building after asbestos has been removed or abated.) To be as protective as possible, EPA, together with NYCDEP and all the other health and environmental agencies, are requiring school reentry standards in tests around the World Trade Center site. NYCDEP, USEPA, and NYC Department of Sanitation worked to perform cleanups of all dust in exterior areas with HEPA vacuums and wetwashing. NYCDEP and EPA have both conducted tests in exterior spaces and all exterior areas of Lower Manhattan that were closed passed their strict protective standards before being opened again to the public.

Asbestos in Dust in Buildings

If a substance contains more than 1% asbestos, it is considered to be an "asbestos-containing material." There are Federal, State, and City regulations in place to ensure the proper handling and disposal of asbestos-containing material. If a substance contains 1% or less asbestos, these regulations do not apply.