

New Task Force Is to Deal With Questions on Air Quality

By DIANE CARDWELL

Responding to the continuing fear and confusion over air safety near ground zero, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg yesterday announced a new task force to coordinate the response of city agencies and to establish a complaint and information phone line about environmental issues in and around the World Trade Center site.

Mr. Bloomberg, who made the announcement with Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton during his weekly call-in radio show, sought to assure listeners about the safety of the air outside of buildings while adding that the air inside them remained a cause for concern.

"You can't walk downtown without tripping over an air quality measurement, but that doesn't mean that everybody is comfortable, and so you have to assure people and give them a chance to ask questions, and also that is measuring, in all fairness,

Indoor Contamination is a prevalent concern.

outside air," Mr. Bloomberg said. "And it's not measuring air in apartments or in buildings."

Officials said the task force, to be run by the city's Office of Emergency Management, would work with federal and state agencies and would operate a hot line with employees of the city's Department of Health and its Department of Environmental Protection available to answer questions about conditions in downtown Manhattan, including environmental test results.

The phone line, (212) 221-8635, is to open on Monday, the six-month mark of the terror attack, and is to operate Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The announcement came as Congressman Jerrold Nadler, who represents the area, accused the federal Environmental Protection Agency of

misleading the public about air safety in Lower Manhattan and as residents and advocates, some wearing masks and holding signs that read "E.P.A. M.I.A." or "Protect the Living," packed a City Council hearing yesterday.

Advocates said that federal agencies like the E.P.A. and the Federal Emergency Management Agency should systematically test and clean apartments and buildings contaminated by dust from the World Trade Center collapse.

Mr. Nadler said that each apartment cleaning could cost \$10,000 to \$20,000, and estimated the total cost for such a cleanup at \$100 million to \$2 billion.

E.P.A. officials said that they had not taken on the responsibility for indoor air quality in the neighborhood because they had not been asked to by FEMA. They added that there were no standards for indoor air safety under the federal Clean Air Act, only procedures relating to asbestos removal during renovation or construction projects.

Mrs. Clinton said yesterday that she would seek to change the law to close that gap, "so no matter what ever happens in the future, man-made or natural disaster, we will have some responsibility lodged somewhere for checking indoor air."

Jane M. Kenny, the regional administrator at the E.P.A.'s office in New York, said that she was baffled by Mr. Nadler's charges.

"E.P.A. has done everything that it could, been part of a team to protect the health and safety of the people in Lower Manhattan," she said.

Asked about the worries over air safety, especially indoors, among residents and workers downtown, she said, "It's so understandable that people are concerned because there is so much noise and so much conflicting information."

She said her agency would work with the city's new task force as well as its own task force on indoor air, which will have its first full meeting on Monday.

As some residents complained yesterday that officials had still not addressed their concerns about pollutants from trucks used to transport debris from the World Trade Center site, others expressed frustration that they had been left with the responsibility for decontaminating

their own apartments, and said that without a government agency overseeing a comprehensive cleanup effort, the risks to their health remained.

"The citizens of Lower Manhattan — residents, workers and building owners — have been victims of a terrorist attack on this nation and should not bear the burden or financial expense of making their homes, offices and businesses safe again," Mr. Nadler said.

"Six months after the attack it is now clear that E.P.A. is the only government entity with the authority, resources, expertise and mandate to do this job."

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Officials Prod EPA

Urge cleanup of apartments near WTC

By Margaret Ramirez

STAFF WRITER

Responding to increasing concerns about contaminated air and dust inside lower Manhattan buildings, several city officials Friday demanded that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency test and clean up apartments near Ground Zero.

The request came during a special City Council hearing on the environmental response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

A frustrated City Councilman James Gennaro (D-Forest Hills) told a panel of federal and city environmental officials that they had failed to help residents clean up dust that could contain asbestos, fiberglass and other toxic substances.

"We're looking at apartments that probably never should have been reoccupied. We're looking at novices that are cleaning this up with wet rags and wet mops. I'm just not happy with novices cleaning up toxic materials," said Gennaro as a crowd of residents in the audience applauded.

At the hearing, several dozen residents, as well as parents whose children attend schools in lower Manhattan, wore surgical masks and held up signs that said, "Stop Poisoning Our Kids," and "Protect the Living."

Mayor Michael Bloomberg Friday signaled that the city may be taking a more active role in the matter

when he and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton announced the formation of a new Downtown air quality task force.

The task force will be led by the Office of Emergency Management and will set up a hotline to answer questions and provide information on environmental conditions of Downtown Manhattan.

"Public confidence in the air quality around the World Trade Center site is essential to the revitalization and economic growth of Downtown," the mayor said. "We cannot attract residents and businesses back into lower Manhattan unless they know they are safe."

After a Senate hearing last month on World Trade Center air quality, EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman set up an Indoor Air Task Force. EPA officials initially said they had not conducted indoor testing because the city had taken that responsibility.

At Friday's hearing, Kathleen Callahan, regional director of the EPA's division of environmental planning and protection, said the federal agency was considering using Federal Emergency Management Agency money for indoor testing and clean up. Callahan would not confirm when or if indoor testing and clean up would begin.

"I think all the agencies involved — city, state and federal — are going to collaborate on what's necessary to assure that people's indoor environments are safe. And that is going to be done in an open fashion," Callahan said.

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EPA accused of neglect in 9/11 cleanup

A watchdog for the Environmental Protection Agency has accused the agency of neglecting its responsibility and urged a cleanup of buildings contaminated by World Trade Center debris.

"EPA has abandoned its responsibility for cleaning up buildings [both inside and out] that are contaminated, or that are being recontaminated, as a result of the uncontrolled chemical releases from the World Trade Center terrorist attacks," Ombudsman Robert Martin wrote in a March 27 letter to Jane Kenny, head of the agency's New York region.

Martin also called on the agency to upgrade the air filtration system at Stuyvesant High School on Chambers St. while it is closed this week during spring break.

EPA spokeswoman Mary Mears said the agency was reviewing the recommendations. "Right now, federal state and local experts do not know whether an interior cleanup is needed," she said.

She noted that the Federal Emergency Management Agency already had agreed to pay the costs of cleaning debris from the rooftops of buildings near the Trade Center site so cleaned apartments won't be recontaminated.

Alison Gendar

Daily News
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A Survey Reveals Sentiment For Keeping Shafts of Light

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

Having gingerly and gratefully grown reaccustomed to the nightly sight of two brilliant columns over Lower Manhattan — a compass point on which so many lives have turned — some New Yorkers seem reluctant to lose them again.

Since March 11, 88 searchlights mounted at Battery Park City, just west of the World Trade Center site, have cast parallel shafts into the sky every evening after dusk, as a temporary "Tribute in Light," scheduled to last two more weeks. Sometimes they ascend endlessly. Sometimes they merely tickle the bottom of low clouds.

But they have definitely struck a chord.

"It's a clear path to heaven," said the architect Ralph Mancini of Mancini Duffy, whose office was in the trade center's south tower. "It made me feel as if we were still there. It made me feel connected to a lot of people. It was a way for me to guide them to God. It was magnificent."

"I wish the lights could stay on until the first person moves into the new design of the trade center," he said, "as a symbol we're all together."

Mr. Mancini, it turns out, is not alone.

"At least for the time being — and maybe for all time — New Yorkers want those twin beams of light to soar," said Maurice Carroll, director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. He released a poll yesterday showing that 39 percent of 1,038 registered voters in the city feel the

agencies and victims' family members as a brief, finite gesture.

"Having made a set of commitments," Mr. Barwick said, "they ought to be honored." There are practical considerations, too. "This was conceived using rented equipment, borrowed materials and temporary structures on land that doesn't belong to us," he said.

The city is deferring to the Municipal Art Society on whether it would be feasible to resume the installation, said Jennifer E. Falk, deputy press secretary to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. Only then would there be a fuller discussion and public review of whether it should be continued.

Besides design, financing and engineering, such a review would have to account for the impact of searchlights on neighbors and on the birds that fly around them.

The New York City Audubon Society is strongly opposed to prolonging the installation, said a board member, Peter Rhoades Mott. Observers have not found any dead or injured birds around the site since March 11, he said, but have noticed that most change their flight patterns.

"Extending the 'Tribute' would substantially increase the likelihood of catastrophe for migrants," Mr. Mott said. Based on a five-year tally around the World Trade Center, some species most at risk would be the American woodcock, hermit thrush, gray catbird and black-throated blue warbler.

The project has won over some who were initially opposed. Anne Pasternak, executive director of Creative Time, a public arts group involved in coordinating the "Tribute in Light," said she had heard praise from someone who once feared the lights would make ground zero look like a used-car lot.

But Ms. Pasternak says she expects a debate if there is a move to make the memorial permanent, perhaps along the lines of whether twin light towers commemorate American economic dominance rather than lost lives.

Even some of the project's earliest supporters question how well it would work permanently.

"Everyone I know felt the thing that made it so strong was its impermanence," said Agnes Gund, president of the Museum of Modern Art. She said the beacons are "very spiritual now, but after a while it would feel like either they should be substantial or not be there."

For some New Yorkers, however, losing even a spectral representation of the trade center might be painful.

"As comforted as people are by seeing this anchor, they are very unsettled by the fact that it's temporary," said Gustavo Bonevardi, who worked on the design with John Bennett, Julian LaVerdiere, Paul Myoda, Richard Nash Gould and Paul Marantz.

"Everyone is questioning why it has to go," Mr. Bonevardi said. "Now that it's done, we feel that it belongs to the city. If that's what the people want to do, we're excited, willing and eager to help in having them come back."

It is clear that even an ephemeral "Tribute in Light" has left an indelible mark.

Richard A. Kahan, co-founder of Take the Field, a nonprofit group devoted to rebuilding athletic fields at public high schools, was on the US Airways shuttle from Washington the night after the lights were first turned on.

"The pilot was announcing it to everyone 50 miles away from New York: 'Those of you on the left side of the plane in 10 minutes will have a spectacular view of the memorial lights,'" Mr. Kahan said. "All of a sudden it struck me that for the pilot, this was part of the American landscape in the same way as other great national monuments."

A temporary tribute strikes a chord. A 'path to heaven,' says one resident.

lights should stay on until a permanent memorial is built and that 36 percent feel the lights themselves should be permanent.

Twenty percent feel the lights should be turned off April 13, as planned. And that is what will happen, said Kent L. Barwick, president of the Municipal Art Society, the chief sponsor of the project, in part because it was approved by various community groups, government

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St. Paul's stays open as refuge

St. Paul's Chapel, which has been serving as a refuge for emergency workers at Ground Zero, will not be closing for a cleanup, as originally planned, a vicar said yesterday.

The historic, 235-year old chapel near the World Trade Center was set to cease operating as a sanctuary and a place for rescue workers to go for hot meals on March 31, Easter Sunday.

But officials decided that St. Paul's, which was covered with asbestos and toxic dust after the attacks and is due for a thorough cleanup, will stay open until May. That's when the cleanup operation at Ground Zero is scheduled to end. *Post Wire Services*

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Bill Would Make It Easier To Sue Over Lead Poisoning

By MICHAEL COOPER

More than half the members of the City Council introduced a bill yesterday that would rewrite a 1999 lead-poisoning prevention law to make it easier for the parents of children with lead poisoning to sue their landlords.

The new bill represented a potentially significant break between the members of the new City Council — which, thanks to term limits, has had more than two-thirds of its 51 seats change hands this year — and the old one. Several current council members described the 1999 law as too lenient and derided it as little more than a “landlord protection act.”

The speaker of the Council, Gifford Miller, a Manhattan Democrat, did not say whether he supported the bill, which would undo a law that was championed by his predecessor, Peter F. Vallone. Tenant advocates said that with 30 council members supporting the new bill, the issue could be an early test of the new Council’s goal of being a more democratic body where legislation moves from the bottom up.

Mr. Miller noted that the 1999 law was struck down by the State Supreme Court, which ruled that the city had not adequately studied the law’s environmental impact, and said that he would wait for the result of the city’s appeal of that ruling before taking a position on the new bill. “We always look for opportunities to strengthen laws,” he said.

Councilman Bill Perkins, a Democrat representing Harlem and the Upper West Side and one of the prime sponsors of the bill, said that it was needed to protect children from lead poisoning. “The measure of good government is how we treat our children,” he said at a news conference outside City Hall, where parents and contractors spoke of their experiences with lead poisoning.

Warren Wechsler, a spokesman for the Real Estate Board of New York, a trade organization representing landlords, said that he had not seen the proposed bill. But he noted that cases of lead poisoning have been falling in New York City recently, and he questioned the need to strengthen the existing law.

“It would seem that the current

*More than half the
Council supports a
bill that would
rewrite a 1999 law.*

law is working quite well,” he said.

The City Council also took a break from its marathon schedule of hearings on Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s budget proposal to submit a budget for its own expenses for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The Council plans to cut its spending by roughly 3 per cent, or \$1.5 million, to \$46.2 million from \$47.7 million.

The cuts to the Council’s budget are less than most city agencies have been asked to make as the city struggles to close its \$4.76 billion budget deficit. And the Council’s plan to reduce its staffing falls short of a challenge from Mr. Bloomberg.

During his inaugural address, Mr. Bloomberg pledged to cut the staff of the mayor’s office by 20 percent, and challenged other elected officials and the City Council to do the same. The mayor said that the city would have to cut many services to balance the budget this year, and argued that elected officials should lead by example.

But when the City Council submitted its operating budget yesterday, its staffing went down only by about 10 percent, to 329 positions from 367 positions.

The mayor’s chief of staff, Peter J. Madonia, saw the glass as half full. “At least they’re moving in the right direction,” Mr. Madonia said.

Mr. Miller, the council speaker, said his office had done a top-to-bottom review and determined that it could not cut any more positions and still function effectively.

“We cut the budget as much as we can,” he said. “We’re always looking for additional ways to be efficient. But I’m proud that for the first time in many years the council has cut its budget, and we’re trying to be as efficient as possible. And we’re committed to tightening our belts, just as we ask other agencies to do.”

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Joel A. Miele Sr., P.E., Commissioner
Charles G. Sturken, Esq., Chief of Staff/Special Counsel

News **Today**

Rose Marabetti
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Date: March 26, 2002

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City to Restrict Water Use

By Dan Janison
STAFF WRITER

City officials were poised last night to impose emergency water restrictions today — including curbs on washing cars and sidewalks and water use by businesses.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has scheduled a drought announcement for 9:15 a.m. at one of the city's water-tunnel facilities in the Bronx.

Under a drought emergency, the city bars the washing of cars, sidewalks and streets, limits the watering of lawns at times other than early morning and late evening every other day, and restricts watering of golf course areas other than tees and greens.

A mayoral spokesman last night declined to confirm or deny that the decision has been made.

Environmental officials warned March 12 that the city was headed for such curbs in two weeks if upstate reservoirs were not boosted by significant rainfall.

Bloomberg's previous appeals for water conservation were mainly voluntary.

A drought emergency is triggered when it appears there's no chance the reservoir system will be filled to capacity by summer.

Two weeks ago, the Catskills reservoir system was about 50 percent full, compared with the usual 87.2 percent this time of year.

At the time, the Department of Environmental Protection was reporting that improvements in water levels have not been rapid enough to avert further concern.

Also at the time, City Council members grilled then-DEP Commissioner Joel Miele on why the city was waiting to take the next step.

After a winter with little snow, the city declared a drought warning on Jan. 27, asking residents to limit water use.

Scheduled to appear outside a DEP valve chamber beneath Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, Bloomberg is expected to urge residents anew to keep showers short, not let the faucets drip and turn off the tap while shaving and brushing teeth.

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Yesterday 52%
Estimated normal... 93%

www.nyc.gov/dep

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Chapel Delays Its Closing At Towers Site

By TINA KELLEY

The leaders of St. Paul's Chapel in Lower Manhattan, which has served as a haven for rescue workers at ground zero since September, said yesterday that they had decided to keep it open until the excavation of the World Trade Center site was completed.

The Episcopal chapel, which is part of Trinity Church, was going to be closed for a cleaning after Easter Sunday services, but chapel officials announced last night that it would continue to provide food, rest and counseling to the workers until the end of May.

The church, at Broadway and Fulton Street, has served 350,000 meals since Sept. 11 to the hundreds of workers who visit the chapel each day. Letters of support and encouragement from all over the country are posted on the walls of the 266-year-old chapel, where George Washington worshiped after his inauguration in 1789.

The parish decided to remain open after receiving an urgent appeal from Commissioner Kenneth R. Holden of the city's Department of Design and Construction, which is responsible for overall cleanup work at the trade center site, said the Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard, vicar of the parish. In January, the parish received an advisory from the city that the exterior of the building needed to be cleaned.

"We will defer our closing and cleanup until the end of May at the request of the commissioner," Father Howard said in a statement.

When asking that the chapel remain open, Mr. Holden estimated that the work of recovering human remains from the site and clearing it would be completed by the end of May, said Matthew Monahan, the department's spokesman.

"We're grateful that they considered that request and accepted it," Mr. Monahan said of the church leaders. "The service and the ministry is so valuable."

John Allen, the spokesman for Trinity Parish, said: "On behalf of the parish, we welcome the position that the city has taken on the matter. From reports I heard at St. Paul's, the rescue workers are very pleased that it's able to continue."

The Rev. Lyndon Harris, who is responsible for the ministry at St. Paul's, said, "We are delighted that we are able to respond to the request of the City of New York to keep the doors of St. Paul's open to the police officers, firefighters and rescue workers as they complete their tasks at the site."

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