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TAKING US INSIDE THE TOWERS

Health problems revealed in WTC workers

48 percent of workers had ear, nose and throat problems and 30 percent had pulmonary problems

By JUSTIN GLANVILLE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nearly two years after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, a medical screening program continues to reveal a surprisingly high rate of physical and mental health problems among cleanup and rescue workers at the site.

About 48 percent of workers screened had ear, nose and throat problems such as nasal congestion, hoarseness, headaches and throat irritation, according to the latest figures from the program. Another 30 percent had pulmonary problems, including shortness of breath, persistent cough and wheezing.

The data reflect patients screened between July 2002 and April 2003, but the director of the program's medical component said patients have continued to report symptoms at about the same rate since then.

"It is surprising that it's lasted this long," said Dr. Jacqueline Moline of Mount Sinai Medical Center, which is administering the screening in conjunction with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

The researchers, who is-

sued preliminary findings in January, described the ongoing examination of the data in interviews this week with The Associated Press. A formal updated analysis is expected within the next several weeks. The researchers' comments come a week after the inspector general of the Environmental Protection Agency criticized that agency for downplaying air quality risks in public statements after the attack.

PERMANENT DAMAGE

"It was such a massive irritant exposure," Moline said. "Some people will be left with permanent respiratory symptoms."

Soot from the collapse of the towers contained asbestos, lead, glass fibers and concrete.

On the mental health side of the study, about 19 percent of patients have been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder — at least double the rate seen in the general population, said Dr. Craig Katz, supervisor of the program's psychological component.

Surprisingly, he said, the percentage has remained constant throughout the program. Typically, people with PTSD have an immediate peak in symptoms, followed by a decline and then a second peak one to two years later.

"You'd expect that it would wane with time," he said. "But it's been the same kind of problems, the same kind of re-



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Nearly two years after this photo was taken of smoke pouring from the World Trade Center, a medical screening program continues to reveal a high number of problems in people who worked at the site following the terrorist attacks.

porting from the beginning of the program to now."

In addition, 56 percent of those screened have reported psychological problems that warrant additional counseling, including insomnia, trouble focusing and irritability.

DEPRESSION CASES

Those symptoms are all potential signs of depression. But they've added up to a diagnosis of major depression in only 5 to 8 percent of patients — about the same as in the general population, Katz said.

The Mount Sinai figures are for site workers who have

visited the hospital and regional centers nationwide between July 2002 — when the program began — and April 2003. To date, about 7,500 workers have been examined, Moline said, with the results of about 1,100 quantified.

The program is considered one of the leading studies of health problems in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attack.

"What they're doing is so important, because it's the only way we're going to find out what will happen to people who were down there," said Dr. Robin Gershon, a professor of sociomedical sciences at Columbia University who is not affiliated with the program. "It's like following the canary in the coal mine."

COST OF \$12M

Medical screening is scheduled to run through next March; psychological screening will continue until June. By that time, about 12,000 of the estimated 30,000 people who worked at the site will have been screened, at a total cost of \$12 million, Moline said. Most of the funding has come from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The program evaluates each subject only once. Those who need further medical or psychological treatment (not funded by the program) are referred to specialists.

Several other ongoing studies are examining the health of workers and residents who were at or near ground zero during or after the attacks.

CITY

Uncertainty Lingers Over Air Pollution in Days After 9/11

By KIRK JOHNSON

The air in Lower Manhattan after Sept. 11 has swirled back into the news — what people knew about it, when they knew it and what they said about it.

A report by the federal Environmental Protection Agency's inspector general lambasted the agency's former administrator, Christie Whitman, for her reassuring statements about the air quality after 9/11. Those comments, investigators said, could not possibly have been based on scientific fact. Mrs. Whitman has strongly defended herself, saying she spoke only what was known at the time.

But the underlying issue, researchers, doctors and politicians say, remains just as unresolved today as it was back then in the chaotic, emotional days after the attacks: How do you communicate something about which no one has ever had any experience? Was there a standard of confidence about the environmental risks and unknowns that was scientifically or perhaps even morally appropriate under the circumstances?

In an interview on Friday, Mrs. Whitman, who left the agency in June, said that on Sept. 18, 2001, when she announced that the air in Lower Manhattan was "safe to breathe," the statement was correct. Outside the smoldering pit of ground zero, she said, the pollutants that the agency was measuring had dropped to near-normal levels. But she said she also believed that New Yorkers — anxious, terrified and in a real way lost at that moment — simply would not have stood for a cold or vaguely worded scientific response.

"They're now saying we didn't have enough information," she said. "But when people are really upset, you can't win. You've got to say something, and what we communicated was what we knew. There may be long-term health implications we never could have conceived of, but we couldn't stop and stay, 'We can't tell you for 10 years.' That absolutely wouldn't work."

Many researchers say they believe that whatever the intentions, Mrs. Whitman's confident words did have implications for how New Yorkers perceived the environmental risks and how they viewed the government's overall response to the disaster.

"There were uncertainties, and in those situations, you should say, one, you don't know, and two, you'll find out," said Dr. Stephen M. Levin, the medical director of the Irving J. Selkoff Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. "And then you make statements based on real data."

Dr. Levin, whose center has examined about 6,000 people exposed to trade center debris, said he thought some companies used Mrs. Whitman's comments to justify ordering their employers back to work downtown even as the dust and smoke swirled, and some of those workers, he said, became his patients. He says some ground zero workers who developed lung problems also may have given themselves "permission" not to use respirators because of her words, even though the final responsibility was their own.

Other health experts say it is not as simple as science and numbers. There was an anxious emotional pitch in New York in those hours, they say — a hunger for certainty and confidence that things would be

all right. Whether it was politics, economics or simple human nature at work, the momentum, they say, was hard to resist.

"There was a tremendous pressure to act like people could move back into their homes, schools and Wall Street," said Professor David Rosner, the director of the Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health at Columbia University. "We wanted the city to be normal again."

Other scientists who were involved from the earliest days in testing the air downtown say that Mrs. Whitman's statements were, in a way, right and wrong at the same time. The cumulative evidence through the months of independent testing by academic researchers and private companies ultimately supported what she had said. But at the time, they say, she could not have known that they would.

"Generally for the public, her statement wasn't that far off in the end," said George D. Thurston, an associate professor of environmental medicine at the New York University School of Medicine. "But it was premature and had no basis at that

point. People don't want to be reassured. They want the facts."

Some of the facts about the disaster's impact will never be known. Few health investigators hovered around the laborers who cleaned dust-choked buildings near the disaster site, for example, so scientists do not know and never will know what those workers breathed.

Other unknowns are still on the horizon. On Friday, New York City and federal health officials began a 20-year project to track the health of up to 200,000 people who were exposed to the disaster. One of the goals, registry organizers say, is to broaden the base of knowledge for use in future disasters.

But some politicians and scientists say that cynicism about the government and the environment, furthered by Mrs. Whitman's assurances, could make future disasters even harder to deal with.

"I know this, if there is another attack, I won't listen to a damn thing they say," said State Senator David A. Paterson, a Democrat from Manhattan, who said last week that he planned to hold legislative hearings

to investigate how the administration of Gov. George E. Pataki handled the environmental crisis.

Some researchers say the E.P.A. was simply the wrong agency for the job, since its responsibility is to monitor and regulate atmospheric conditions long term, not in the pell-mell crush of a crisis.

"There may have been politics, but I think it had much more to do with bureaucratic structure," said Patrick L. Kinney, an associate professor at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. "The E.P.A. is not a fast-moving organization. It's hard for them to make statements and respond in a quick way to changing circumstances."

Mrs. Whitman said that the agency had learned from the crisis but that she had no regrets or second thoughts about anything she had said or done.

"Nobody was trying to tell people that things were normal," she said. "Things were not normal. But to the extent they were normal in the ambient air quality outside ground zero, don't think there was anything wrong with saying that."

Handwritten signature

Raising a stink ✓ about the EPA

As traumatized New Yorkers trudged through ash-covered streets after 9/11, many wondered how dangerous it was to breathe the acrid air that smelled of chemicals and death. Common sense said the asbestos, benzene and other toxins released in the collapse would harm those who inhaled them. But the Environmental Protection Agency insisted otherwise.

A week after the attacks, then-EPA Administrator Christie Whitman said, "I am glad to reassure the people of New York . . . that the air is safe to breathe and their water is safe to drink." She offered no data to prove this. In fact, the air downtown was not safe.

Six weeks after the attacks, Daily News columnist Juan Gonzalez reported that internal government documents revealed that toxic substances were in the air and soil around Ground Zero at levels far exceeding federal standards. But instead of focusing on a cleanup, the EPA had launched a coverup.

Whitman even wrote an Opinion article for this paper in October 2001. Given The News' coverage, she declared, "the public could understandably conclude that the situation at Ground Zero presents a major environmental health hazard to area residents and employees. That would be inaccurate."

Turns out, Whitman was, ahem, inaccurate. A recently released EPA inspector general's report says she should not have made such a "blanket statement" because the facts proved otherwise. It also says James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, "influenced EPA press releases" to downplay the health risks of breathing the air in lower Manhattan. In other words, Whitman and Connaughton were blowing smoke.

Whitman's explanation for that? "We didn't want to scare people." She also argues that when rescue workers declined to wear protective clothing and masks, "we couldn't force them to do it." But why did they decline? Because Whitman had told them the air was safe.

The inspector general's report recommends that the EPA now "employ aggressive testing" in residential and commercial buildings. Washington owes at least that much to New York.

A News poll of New Yorkers found that 77% believe the EPA's voluntary cleanup program downtown was insufficient and that the federal government should pay for a full decontamination of commercial and residential buildings affected by 9/11.

The feds did more than tell white lies about the white ash that wafted over lower Manhattan. Now they must set the record straight about who knew what when, and undertake a new cleanup that will ensure that downtown buildings are absolutely safe.

Daily News
9/14/03

NY Times
9-8-03Grand Jew

E.P.A. in the Cross Hairs

The Environmental Protection Agency and the White House Council on Environmental Quality have been sharply criticized for playing down the potential dangers of exposure to ash, smoke and dust generated by the collapse of the World Trade Center. The inspector general of the E.P.A. has criticized the agency for making overly reassuring statements that could not be supported by any evidence in hand, and blamed the environmental council for pushing the E.P.A. to eliminate caveats and accentuate the positive. Our own sense is that much of the criticism is retrospective nitpicking of decisions made in the midst of a crisis, but it does seem clear that federal and local agencies could have better informed residents of any hazards they would face when they returned to work or live in the area.

Even so, it is important to understand that the major victims of exposure to pollutants were workers at the site or cleaning up buildings who failed to use respirators. Many of them are now being treated for continuing respiratory ailments, and some may well face lifelong disability. The broader public faced little or no risk from breathing the outdoor air once the initial cloud settled. An unpublished E.P.A. risk analysis found that people were unlikely to suffer adverse health effects from the outdoor air they breathed. Outside experts told the inspector general's office that levels of airborne asbestos, the

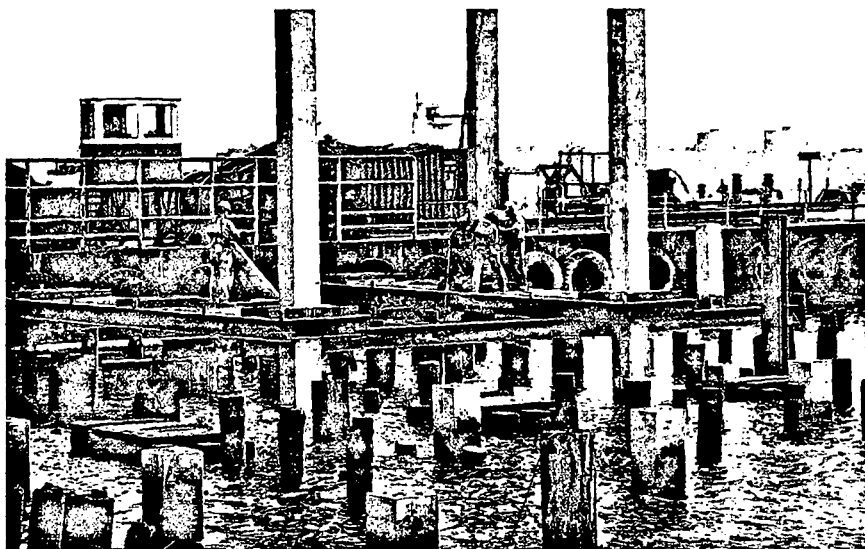
most feared contaminant, posed no significant long-term risk.

The main issue is whether apartments and offices have been adequately cleaned and tested to ensure that no toxic dust remains to cause a long-term risk to inhabitants. The inspector general's report faults both the E.P.A. and, by implication, New York City's Health Department for failing to press residents and businesses to seek professional cleaning in contaminated apartments instead of doing the cleaning themselves. Only 4,100 apartments have been cleaned or tested under a program eventually established by the city and federal government. Some 18,000 residential units were not tested or cleaned through the program, but many were presumably cleaned and tested before the program started. Nobody knows how many buildings might still have dust lingering in rugs, furniture or air vents that could emerge to cause a hazard. That suggests the need for one final testing program.

The real long-term health effects, if any, will not be known for decades. City and federal health officials started an ambitious tracking project on Friday that will try to follow the health histories of up to 200,000 people exposed to the pollutants. It behooves all who fear for their health or want to contribute to important research to participate.

Parks

MANHATTAN PARK CALLED MOST SIGNIFICANT ADDITION IN 150 YEARS



NEW YORK CITY IS SET TO OPEN THE first piece of a new \$380-million park that will ultimately become Manhattan's second largest, 150 years after Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux began design work on the borough's other great retreat, Central Park.

The first of six sections of Hudson River Park, a study in modern landscape engineering, will be dedicated May 29. The park is being built atop a five-mile stretch of bulkheaded, pier-studded river front reclaimed from generations of industrial and warehouse use and a long slide into dereliction. When completed in about seven years, the park will have 150 upland acres and 400 acres of water cupped between 13 amenity-laden concrete piers, most over 800 ft long.

"This is the most significant park to be introduced in Manhattan since Central Park," says Marc Boddewyn, vice president of the Hudson River Park Trust, a partnership between the State of New York and New York City that is developing the property.

Boddewyn, a landscape architect, has been in charge of design and construction of the park for the last 3½ years. His background is both in construction and operation of other parks in the city, which he says has sharpened his perceptions about how design and construction can adversely affect operations. "It really makes you appreciate decisions made

during the design process," he says.

Experience also has taught him that while money can usually be found for capital projects, operations are another matter, so creating a "zero maintenance" park has been the overarching goal. The Trust approaches that goal by making extensive use of 317 stainless steel for waterside fencing and other furniture, long-lasting Ipe (a farmed and sustainable tropical hardwood) for rails and benches and FieldTurf artificial grass for playing surfaces. The grass-like material features long polyethylene "blades" planted into a base of sand and a deep layer of granulated rubber. The surface is soft and pliable, resists compaction and drains extremely well, Boddewyn says.

The artificial grass is used for sports fields and picnic areas on the piers. Other areas are hard-surfaced for fishing and other uses. The piers are built on prestressed concrete piles threaded among the timber remains of their predecessors. Long-term maintenance of the park includes maintaining that volume of deteriorating timber, which supports a thriving population of fish, wildfowl and aquatic organisms.

On the upland side, natural plantings are used, but the base has been carefully engineered for low maintenance. Grading for drainage pans with fabric and gravel-wrapped perforated PVC pipe was minimized to avoid potentially contaminated soil. The topsoil includes same-sized sand granules to minimize compaction.

Two of the most daunting issues have been surveying and correcting the miles of century-old stone bulkhead

founded on wooden piles and grillage, and coordinating the complex project, Boddewyn says. Each of the five segments in various stages of design and construction has its own team of architects, engineers and consultants. The overall project management team has 15 firms, with the local offices of Ove Arup & Partners managing design and Bovis Lend Lease leading project management. The Trust requires all firms to use Constructware Web-based project management services to keep the job sorted out. It has been "a huge key for us to pull this off with the limited staff we have," Boddewyn says.

"Constructware has been great when there could be 60 to 80 architects and engineers working on the project at any given time," Boddewyn says. "It totally eliminates the 'where did you save that?' problem. We couldn't do this without it." □

By Tom Sawyer



KEEPERS New piers top old ones, retaining aquatic habitat.



NEW VIEW Boddewyn knows operations.

PHOTO TOP COURTESY OF HUDSON RIVER PARK TRUST; CENTER BY WILLIAM G. KRIZAN FOR ENR; BOTTOM BY TOM SAWYER FOR ENR

Taxes

CONSTRUCTION SEES GAINS FROM TAX BILL, AT LEAST IN NEAR TERM

THE \$350-BILLION PACKAGE OF TAX cuts and aid to fiscally strapped states that awaits President Bush's signature should provide some help to construction firms, particularly those taxed as individuals. But the measure's ultimate payoff for the industry may hinge on whether it will give the economy the lift its advocates say it will.

Final congressional action on the bill came May 23 with the Senate's approval. A 50-50 tie there was broken by Vice President Dick Cheney's affirmative vote. The House had passed the measure the previous day, by a 231-200 vote.

"It is a short- to medium-term positive for the construction industry," says Kenneth D. Simonson, the Associated General Contractors' chief economist. He says the legislation will spark consumer spending, which should lead to increased construction demand by manufacturers and service providers.

But Simonson adds, "It's an open question what will happen over the longer term, because Congress will have to come to grips with the large budget deficits that this bill creates."

The measure "will give the economy the boost it needs to grow," says Treasury Secretary John Snow. The bill will help the hundreds of thousands of construction firms that operate as partnerships or S corporations, which are taxed as individuals. For those taxpayers, the bill speeds up cuts in rates and enlarges the child credit. It also cuts the rate on capital gains and dividend income.

Businesses also gain expanded depreciation benefits. For example, companies will be able write off in the first year 50% of the value of purchased goods, up from 30% now. That applies to items purchased between May 5, 2003, and Jan. 1, 2005. The threshold for expens-

ing also climbs to \$100,000 per year, from \$25,000. The sweeter depreciation breaks are a plus for equipment firms, says Nick Yaksich, Association of Equipment Manufacturers' vice president for government affairs. "But we still need economic growth before the depreciation can really kick in," he adds.

Hard-pressed state budgets get \$20 billion in federal aid, half of which will go to "essential government services," and the rest for Medicaid. "It's not going to save the day for the states, but it will be some help," says Nicholas Jenny, senior policy analyst at the Rockefeller

WHO BENEFITS FROM TAX BILL:

► **INDIVIDUALS, PARTNERSHIPS, S CORPORATIONS**
Income tax rate cuts accelerated to 2003 that were to take effect in 2004 and 2006. Top rate for 2003 becomes 35%.

Accelerates to 2003 and 2004 expansion of 10% tax bracket limit that was to take effect in 2008.

Capital gains rates cut to 5% and 15% from current 10% and 20%. Dividend income rate cut to 5% and 15% from current individual rates, which are as high as 38.6%.

► BUSINESSES

Increases "bonus depreciation" writeoff in first year to 50% of value of item, from 30% now. Also extends bonus through calendar year 2004. Applies to goods acquired between 5/5/03 and 1/1/06.

Increases value of capital goods that can be expensed to \$100,000, from current \$25,000. Applies to goods put in service in tax years 2003-2005. Total value of goods subject to expensing provision raised to \$400,000 a year, from \$200,000 now. Dollar limits annually indexed for inflation in 2003-2005.

► STATE GOVERNMENTS

\$20 billion in federal aid divided among states. Includes \$10 billion for "essential government services" and \$10 billion for Medicaid.

Source: Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation

Institute of Government in Albany, N.Y. Construction won a victory when congressional conferees dropped a Senate-passed provision that would have ended the income exclusion for taxpayers who work abroad. But the idea may resurface in future tax bills. Says AGC's Simonson: "That's one I think we need to remain particularly vigilant about."

By Tom Ichniowski

Investigations

CHARGES AGAINST WTC STUDY DENIED

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL Engineers, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and members of the World Trade Center building performance study team emphatically deny the existence of any written or oral agreement relating to the authority's control of content of the ASCE-Federal Emergency Management Agency study of the Sept. 11, 2001, destruction of the World Trade Center. The denials are in response to critical remarks about the report made by a professor of civil engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, at a May 9 meeting in Los Angeles, sponsored by the Los Angeles Tall Buildings Structural Design Council.

The authority and FEMA did craft an agreement relating to the authority's release to the ASCE study team of the plans of six WTC buildings. A letter dated Dec. 26, 2001, to Paul Tertell, FEMA's program manager for the study team, from Francis J. Lombardi, the authority's chief engineer, said plans are furnished "solely for use in the conduct" of the study and that, regarding the plans, the study team's confidentiality agreement was binding.

In addition, the authority and Leslie E. Robertson Associates retained the right to review the report prior to its publication relating to "content derived from...review of the WTC plans." This was "for fact-checking only," says Lombardi. On April 2, 2002, Lombardi sent five comments to the BPAT team. These included a typo and four other corrections or suggestions regarding figures or accompanying text relating to the plans.

Asked to clarify his remarks to 130 attendees during a presentation entitled "Field Investigation and Analysis of Collapse of the WTC Towers," Abolhassan Astaneh-Asl, the Berkeley professor, said: "I don't have any first-hand information," but "my opinion was and is" that there would be nothing "negative" about the WTC in the report. "This was my impression," says Astaneh, whose analysis of the tragedy is still under way.

"We did not sign anything saying we would not say anything negative about port authority materials or buildings," says W. Gene Corley, of Construction Technology Laboratories Inc., and WTC building performance study team leader.

Several attendees say Astaneh's critical remarks were "without merit." One characterized his intentions—to learn from the WTC tragedy—as good.

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April 3, 2002

AIR PURIFIERS AND FILTER

AIR PURIFIERS AND FILTERS OFFERS HOME AIR AND ELECTROSTATIC AIR FILTERS, INCLUDING IONIC ROOM AIR PURIFIERS, AN HEPA FILTERS. HOME PURIFIERS REDUCE ALLERGY INDUCED HEADACHES, FATIGUE, BREATHING PROBLEMS AND SLEEP LOSS. AIR FILTERS PROVIDES RELIEF FROM ASTHMA, HAT FEVER, CHRONIC COUGH, WHEEZING, SINUS PROBLEMS AND RUNNY NOSE. AIR PURIFIERS REDUCE SICKNESS. INDOOR JPOLUTANTS COMMONLY FOUND IN INDOOR AIR, IONIZED DUST, POLLEN, AND OTHER PARTICLES FROM THE AIR ARE REMOVED (NO PARTICLES FLOATING IN SUNBEAMS!). AIR PURIFIERS TAKES PARTICLES AND GASES OUT OF THE AIR.

HEPA, HONEYWELL AND AUSTIN HELP ELIMINATES 98% OF ODORS INCLUDING THOSE FROM SMOKE, PETS COOKING, NEW PAINT, NEW CARPET, NEW FURNITURE HOUSEHOLDPRODUCTS, ETC...

WHEN PURCHASING AIR PURIFIERS, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND THE SIZE OF THE ROOM THAT CARRIES CONCERNS. E.g. IF YOU HAVE A LARGE ROOM WITH AIR CONCERNS THEN YOU WILL NEED TO PURCHASE AN AIR PURIFIER THAT WILL PURIFY THE AREA. LENGTH, WIDTH, AND HEIGHT ARE VERY, VERY IMPORTANT WHEN PURCHASING AIR PURIFIERS.

HERE AT THE HOTLINE WE DO NOT GIVE NAMES, OR INFORMATION ON PRODUCTS. YOU ARE FREE TO GET PROFESSIONAL ASSISTACE AT YOUR OWN RISK

AS OF THE CURRENT DATE THERE ARE NO REEMBURSEMENT AVAILABLE.

YOU MAY OBTAIN PRODUCTS BY SEARCHING THE INTERNET AS WELL AS USING THE YELLOW PAGES.

- **THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF AIR PURIFIERS THAT CAN BE PURCHASED.**
- **REMEMBER THAT MEASUREMENTS ARE MOST IMPORTANT.**
- **SEEK PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION BEFORE PURCHASING.**
- **PRICES RANGES ANYWHERE BETWEEN \$700-\$1500 ALTROUGH**
- **THERE ARE SOME INEXPENSIVE UNITS AVAILABLE**
- **REMEMBER, DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE ROOM TO BE CLEANED, THE UNIT WILL BE MOST EFFECTIVE WITH PROPER MEASUREMENTS.**