

7/26/02
press release

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PRESS RELEASE

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection's Commissioner, Christopher O. Ward, today announced that the Exterior Building Cleanup Program, begun on June 7, has to date, cleaned 81 roofs and exteriors of buildings in the downtown area.

The exterior cleanup program is part of a federal, state and local government program to further reassure the public that air quality in lower Manhattan is, and will continue to be, safe for residents, workers and visitors. Commissioner Ward said, "that by instituting progressive initiatives such as the exterior building cleanup, we will promote public confidence as we allow lower Manhattan to realize its full potential. Throughout the process, we have had unwavering support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

The exterior building cleanup program is entirely funded by a \$10.1 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, through the FEMA/State of New York Public Assistance Program. President Bush authorized FEMA to pay for 100 percent of the program costs following his disaster declaration of September 11 tragedy.

"Our aim is a safe and secure environment in lower Manhattan for the millions of residents, workers and visitors who spend time there," said FEMA Director Joe M. Allbaugh. "Supporting the city's efforts to reduce and eliminate any possible harmful effects caused by the continued presence of this material is FEMA's goal."

Under the program, building owners whose properties have been identified as having World Trade Center debris are eligible to have the debris removed at no cost. To date, over 1,000 buildings in the downtown area have been inspected. In addition to the 81 buildings cleaned to date, 56 buildings are either in the process of being cleaned or have been scheduled for future cleanup.

The work is being conducted by licensed asbestos contractors, under the supervision of DEP personnel. Commissioner Ward said, "cleanups are being conducted at times that are least intrusive to the residents and businesses in the area.

Additionally, 60 buildings have been cleaned by building owners, independent of the government program.

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Subject: PLAN FOR PRESS RELEASE ON TASK FORCE

Sometime in the very near future, potentially tomorrow, EPA plans to send out a VERY short (1 or 2 paragraph) press release about the fact that the Task Force on Indoor Air in Lower Manhattan is convening next week. We do not intend to make the task force meeting open to the public, but we think it's important that the public knows we are moving forward. We will not say much, only that the Task Force exists and that they will discuss various issues. There will be no mention of plans to test or sample - just the fact that we are looking at whether there is a need to test or sample. This will not go beyond our letter to Hillary Clinton when we told her that we were setting up the task force. I do not yet have a draft, but will have one for you all to look at tomorrow AM.