

Monday 04 of Mar 2002, Mayor Office

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**THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007**

Date : 03/04/02

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Subject: Latest Proposal

This time with attachment - sorry.

Dear Colleagues-

Attached is the latest version of the proposal for the expanded task force. Please e-mail or fax me any comments by 1pm; OEM and the Press Office would like to present it to D/M Doctoroff by the end of the day. Reminder - the hotline group is meeting today at 1pm, and the group working on testimony for Friday's hearing is meeting at 3pm; both meetings are on the 2nd floor at 100 Gold Street.

Thank you,  
Lee

*Ms. Lee Ilan  
Senior Environmental Planner  
Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination*

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25 February 2002

## **Proposal for Expanded Lower Manhattan Environmental Task Force**

Since 11 September, the City has marshaled agency expertise and state and federal resources to respond to environmental, health, and safety issues resulting from the attacks on the World Trade Center. From day one, OEM directed that daily meetings be held to share information and assign responsibilities. The immediate focus was on the agencies responding to various aspects of the disaster. Now, nearly six months later, the frequency of most of these meetings has lessened, but the need for information remains strong, especially with the public, elected officials, and the press.

In recognition of this, the Mayor has asked that OEM spearhead a task force of City agencies with expertise on environmental, health, and safety matters to restore confidence and to coordinate public information efforts about the status of Lower Manhattan. Reassuring residents, businesses, and workers that the air is safe and that other environmental issues are being addressed in a timely manner is essential to the rebuilding and revitalization process. OEM has convened a task force of City agencies to coordinate lower Manhattan environmental and health activities, along the lines of the task forces for West Nile Virus Prevention/Control and Rodent Control. The task force will inform the deputy mayors of critical issues as the effort progresses.

### **Expanded Task Force Proposal**

It is essential that the City speak with one voice about conditions in lower Manhattan. A false perception exists that we are not doing much on environmental matters in this area. We propose that the task force be given a mandate and resources to:

- quickly establish a hotline for all lower Manhattan environmental and health matters
- retain professional firms to disseminate a consistent message in various forums to City agencies, other governmental entities, the press, and the public
- serve as a clearinghouse for environmental monitoring data and share it with the public in terms understandable to a lay person
- determine how best to refute misleading data being circulated
- serve as a liaison with state and federal agencies and elected officials

We propose that the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development lead this confidence-building initiative in initial announcements of its existence. A kickoff event involving the Mayor and perhaps Senator Clinton would do much to garner attention and express the high importance of this endeavor.

### **Major Proposed Activities**

- **Hotline**  
The task force is presently working to establish a hotline to provide information to residents, businesses, workers, visitors, parents, etc. on issues of air quality, risk, cleaning of buildings. Feature all agencies' environmental testing results (such as daily DEP asbestos update, EPA, ATSDR, NIOSH data); interpret these results; and provide links to other testing information. Five people each from DEP and DOH could serve as staff, and additional computer/database

Share

staff would be necessary as well. A website and a storefront office should be established as well. Maximum expected volume is approximately 100 calls per day, based on calls to DEP-HELP on the air quality issue. Other lower Manhattan matters would be referred to Andy Salkin (construction/utilities/street closings) and Josh Sirefman (economic development) as appropriate.

- Review data and analyze risk

Retain a professional environmental engineering firm to review all the bulk and air quality data collected to date and to perform a broad-based risk analysis. Commission the firm to make more definite statements and clear comparisons of risks than have been made to date (e.g. comparisons of air quality in Lower Manhattan vs. LA or Houston or Mexico City.) The firm should also develop interesting and user-friendly charts and graphics that will convey these risks to a lay audience.

*EPA currently undertaking*

- Public information campaign

Retain a professional communications firm to develop an aggressive community outreach campaign with pamphlets, videos, a web site, and maps to communicate environmental data and showcase the City's response efforts in Lower Manhattan. Promote the efforts the City has already undertaken – there has been an extraordinary level of cooperation between many governmental entities throughout this process.

- Air quality ombudsman

Hire a reputable environmental consultant to act as an ombudsman/advocate for the public with the City, attend community board meetings, assist the community in interpreting data, etc. The firm would be available to answer questions and even perform some basic indoor air quality testing upon request. OEM reports that this was done for the lead paint issue, and it worked well.

*EPA Tool Force*

- Digitize DEP sampling results

DEP has information on over 100,000 samples taken by contractors in private buildings. Organize, digitize, and share this info to reassure the public (check with DEP legal on this.) Develop database to provide information on timing and results of testing at given addresses south of Chambers. Hotline operators could provide this information.

*\$300,000 EPA to do this*

- Enforcement authority

Determine agencies' (DEP, DOH, HPD, DOB) enforcement authority regarding testing and cleaning dust. Decide upon enforcement efforts and document them. Promotion of this must be balanced with desire not to discourage business and investment in the area. Check on regulatory authority of DEP, HPD, and DOB and whether dust can be declared a public health nuisance.

*Delris*

- Refute misleading data and interpretations

Misleading data regarding Lower Manhattan's environmental safety has been publicly released, causing confusion among area residents and businesses. The eventual result has been the erosion of the public's confidence in the ability of various government agencies to address environmental issues in Lower Manhattan. For example an EPA scientist in Washington, Cate Jenkins, has circulated a number of memos on EPA letterhead disputing EPA's air quality assurances. EPA has to date not refuted her allegations but has expressed an intention to do so in the near future. The City should consider asking a blue ribbon panel of health experts (from NYU, Columbia, Mount Sinai) to examine published data and

~~comment on risk and on the City's efforts.~~

- Make available a list of certified or approved cleaning contractors.
- Recommend legislative initiatives, if necessary.
- EPA has convened an indoor air quality task force of FEMA, ATSDR, State DOH, City DOH, DEP, and MOEC. The City will work (cautiously) with EPA in this endeavor.

### **Funding**

Restoring public confidence in the environment and the City is critical for restoring the economic health of Lower Manhattan. This will require an investment of money. Some ideas for funding sources:

- Enlist Senator Clinton's help in funding the initiative and share the credit
- Approach Virginia Fields, Jerry Nadler, Alan Gerson and other members of the "Ground Zero" Task Force for the retention of the air quality ombudsman.
- Lower Manhattan Development Corp.
- Public-private partnerships
- Seek FEMA reimbursement
- Available City funds?

### **Expertise required, as necessary:**

The core of the task force consists of OEM, DOH, DEP, DDC, DOT, the Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination, the Mayor's Press Office, and a representative from D/M Doctoroff's staff.

As necessary, OEM will request expertise from other agencies (Board of Ed, DCAS, DCP, DOB, DOITT, DOS, EDC, FDNY, HPD, Law Department, Mayor's Community Assistance Unit, Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mayor's Office of Operations, NYPD, OMB) and entities (private utilities, NYS DOT, NYS DEC, Port Authority, MTA, Battery Park City Authority.)