



**Department of
Environmental
Protection**

59-17 Junction Boulevard
Corona, New York
11368-5107

**Joel A. Miele Sr., P.E.
Commissioner**

October 25, 2001

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.

EPA is using the 1% definition in evaluating exterior dust samples in the Lower Manhattan area near the World Trade Center. All affected landlords have been instructed to test dust samples within their build-



www.nyc.gov/dep

(718) DEP-HELP

ings utilizing this standard. Landlords were notified that they should not reopen any building until a competent professional had properly inspected their premise. If more than 1% asbestos was found and testing and cleaning was necessary, it had to be performed by certified personnel.

Drinking Water

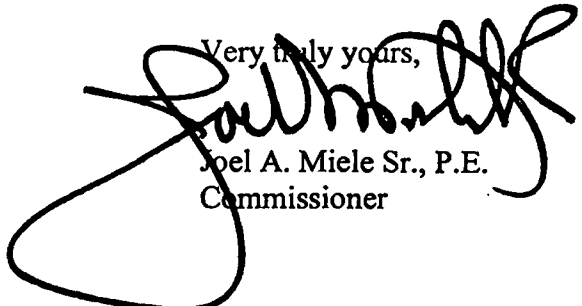
NYC DEP continuously tests drinking water every day for multiple parameters. After the World Trade Center disaster, DEP expanded the number of tests taken and the parameters of testing. EPA also conducted separate tests. Before and after the event, New York City drinking water has met and continues to meet all Federal, State, and City standards. Testing at a heightened level is continuing.

NYC Department of Health

The New York City Health Commissioner Neal L. Cohen, M.D. has reviewed the findings of the various testing agencies and issued the following statements to residents. He said "despite the smoky conditions in areas of lower Manhattan that are close to the World Trade Center site, test results from the ongoing monitoring of airborne contaminants indicate that the levels continue to be below the level of concern to public health. Nonetheless, while debris continues to be disturbed, and while flare-ups of smoke continue to permeate the downtown area, air-testing results will continue to be monitored, and appropriate health recommendations will be issued as necessary." Dr. Cohen added, "As work continues at the disaster site, the presence of dust and smoke odor in the downtown area has been of understandable concern to residents. However, air monitoring by Federal, State and City agencies has indicated that the levels of particulate matter being detected are below the level of public health concern and do not pose long-term health risks to the general public."

In addition to air monitoring activities, efforts are being made daily to suppress dust and smoke at the World Trade Center disaster site. Results of daily dust sampling conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is available online at epa.gov. Factsheets detailing Health Department recommendations pertaining to air quality, asbestos, safely reoccupying homes and buildings, and worker safety are available online at nyc.gov/health. For more information about all Health Department activities, New Yorkers can call (212) 227-5269. For information about asbestos issues, you can consult our website at nyc.gov/dep or call the New York City Department of Environmental Protection at (718) DEP-HELP and ask to be referred to our asbestos staff.

Very truly yours,



Joel A. Miele Sr., P.E.
Commissioner