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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

DEM
Mon Fri
9am-5p
Hotline

5 people

February 12, 2002

OFFICE OF THE
ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Clinton:

I have noted with concern reports of the hearing you held yesterday in New York City regarding the environmental response to the attack on the World Trade Center. I share your concern about the environmental conditions facing residents, workers, and visitors to Lower Manhattan. I certainly agree that the federal government has an important role to play in both monitoring current conditions and in trying to develop reliable information about short-term and long-term health effects on people living and working in the area surrounding the World Trade Center site.

In reviewing the response of the Environmental Protection Agency to the attack of September 11th, I have been impressed with the level of dedication, commitment, and expertise EPA personnel have brought to bear on this unprecedented challenge. It is worth noting that our Region 2 EPA office, located just blocks from the World Trade Center, was displaced as a result of the attack, sharing in the same difficulties and concerns as others who live and work in the area. Nevertheless, EPA personnel were on the scene establishing environmental monitoring programs almost immediately. That monitoring has continued, uninterrupted, until the present time -- and will continue as long as necessary. I am proud of the work EPA's dedicated employees have done in Lower Manhattan.

Although local governments are generally the primary lead in responding to disasters, those governments can and should turn to the federal government for assistance where they need it. In this event, the City of New York asked the EPA to assume lead responsibility for monitoring the outdoor conditions at and around the site of the event and for decontaminating the streets and other outdoor public areas. In response to their request, we have established numerous monitoring stations around Lower Manhattan that have been analyzing both air and particulates for various toxins known to cause long-term risks to public health; cleaned the streets and other public areas of dust and debris, and; established wash stations at which workers at the site could remove any dust and debris they may have been carrying on their clothing. We were on the scene almost immediately, assisting those responsible for New York City worker safety.

To: Charlie
Bob Avaltoni

2-13

Look what EPA sent over...

Mark
2.

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In addition, we have made every effort to disseminate to the public the results of our monitoring. Our web site (www.epa.gov) contains the results of all of our outdoor monitoring going back to September. We have endeavored to present the information gained from our monitoring in a form readily understandable and accessible to the general public.

It has become clear in recent days that despite our best efforts, some results that were developed by other federal agencies and that would have been of interest to the public were not disseminated through our web site. Even though that data was consistent with our own, I still believe the public interest would have best been served by making it available promptly. That is why I have directed my staff to review both our internal and inter-agency procedures for evaluating for inclusion on our web site such information that comes into our possession. I am committed to the public's right to know.

Fortunately, the results of our testing of outdoor environmental conditions to date have consistently indicated that air quality in Lower Manhattan does not pose a long-term risk to those who live, work, or visit there. Of course, that does not necessarily apply to workers at Ground Zero — for them, we continue to urge the use of protective gear as they perform their very difficult and dangerous work.

I am also pleased that over the same period of time, testing done by other agencies has confirmed the results which we have found. For example, when looking at asbestos, analysis done by the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) through use of their AVIRIS remote sensing device is consistent with studies done by the EPA. As Commissioners Frieden and Miele testified at your hearing yesterday about their analysis of various testing and monitoring done at the site, "The data from air quality tests thus far have been, in general, reassuring. None of the testing done to date has shown results that would indicate long-term health impacts."

Although I am encouraged by the results of this testing, I am not yet satisfied. Too many questions remain about possible short-term health effects and about short-term exposures to materials not previously evaluated, such as fibrous glass, gypsum, mica, etc. To help fill-in our knowledge about these issues, our Office of Research and Development has already launched tests on mice to evaluate the health effects of short-term exposures of the particulates generated by the destruction of the World Trade Center.

In addition, I have asked the President's science advisor, Dr. Jack Marburger, to convene an inter-agency panel to pull together all the work the various federal agencies are doing to study environmental conditions and possible resultant health risks in Lower Manhattan. I also asked him to put out a request for information about work those outside the federal government may be doing. It is important that the numerous efforts that are ongoing in this area be pulled together, evaluated, and synthesized, so that the public can be fully and clearly informed about the work that has been conducted by various federal agencies and others.

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DEP

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Of course, the environmental issues of concern to those who live, work, and visit Lower Manhattan are not limited to outdoor air quality issues. People are also justly concerned about indoor environmental quality. The enormous amount of particulates released by the collapse of the World Trade Center towers permeated many of the surrounding buildings, including apartments, offices, and other indoor spaces throughout the area surrounding Ground Zero.

As you may recall, in the days immediately following September 11th, the City of New York assumed responsibility for indoor environmental quality. Clearly, the magnitude of the challenge faced by the City in addressing indoor environmental concerns is staggering. Nevertheless, the City Department of Health, its Department of Environmental Protection, and its Office of Emergency Management have taken numerous steps to address potential indoor environmental problems. I understand those efforts were described to you in detail at your hearing yesterday by Commissioners Frieden and Miele.

Despite the City's best efforts to address indoor environmental issues, it is apparent that many concerns and challenges remain. I am committed to providing additional assistance to the City and its residents and stand ready to do so. In addition, as you suggested yesterday, I will be working with our local, state, and federal partners to establish a Task Force on Indoor Air in Lower Manhattan, so that we can move as quickly as possible to address the remaining concerns we all share.

I should point out, however, that work has already begun to evaluate indoor air quality in Lower Manhattan. Last November and December, at the request of the City, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conducted sampling of air and particulates in 30 buildings in Lower Manhattan. The EPA has assisted ATSDR in this effort by providing resources to analyze those samples. This provides a good base for further study.

In addition, the \$2.7 billion in Community Development Block Grant funds appropriated by the Congress at Senator Clinton's request to assist New York City is available for, among other things, addressing the remaining indoor environmental concerns in Lower Manhattan. Those funds could be used to address the unmet indoor environmental needs of residents and building owners in Lower Manhattan.

All of this being said, however, I believe Congress and the Administration need to revisit the issue of authority and responsibility for indoor environmental conditions in the wake of a terrorist attack. It may be that the current practice, vesting in local or state governments primary responsibility for indoor environmental conditions is not appropriate in the wake of an event like September 11th. I would welcome the chance to work with you and your colleagues to explore this issue further. But until such determinations are made for future eventualities, we will continue to offer our full support to the City of New York and stand ready to respond to any further requests they may make for our assistance in dealing with indoor environmental issues.

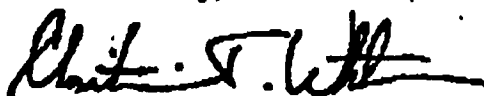
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The environmental and public health issues resulting from the attacks of September 11th have no precedent in the experience of this Agency or of the federal government. Despite the challenges EPA faced and faces, I am proud of the work our dedicated employees have done in response to the attack on our Nation. Nevertheless, I also believe there are areas where we can improve. That is why we have been reviewing and evaluating our efforts to date and why I am committed to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that should we face a similar situation in the future, we will have fully integrated the lessons we've learned from this experience.

I know we all share the same goal - to protect, as best as we possibly can, the people of the United States from the environmental hazards which may exist following a terrorist attack. You have my pledge that we at EPA will continue to work as hard as we can to meet that obligation to the people of New York and to be ready to meet it should the need arise in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Christine Todd Whitman

FEB-19-2002 16:26

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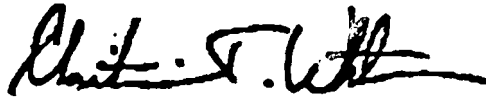
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Yours sincerely,



Christine Todd Whitman

1732) 321 - 6616