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NYC D.E.P. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

F.02/02



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February 1, 2002

Natalie Millner, public affairs
New York Department of Environmental Protection

Dear Ms. Millner:

Thank you for your help with my story. Here are my questions.

- Has DEP done any indoor testing of air or dust for asbestos? — *left the landlord*
- If not, why not? If you have, when did it start and why did it take so long to commence? — *Recent*
- If you have data on asbestos in indoor air and/or dust, is it publicly available?
- The EPA says that soon after Sept. 11, the responsibility for indoor-air testing was passed to the city. Do you agree with that version of events?
- Does DEP have the same expertise and depth of staff that EPA does when it comes to testing indoor air?
- According to some outside observers, the city didn't want EPA to have a role in indoor tests for asbestos. Do you disagree?
- If you do test for asbestos indoors, which protocol or methodology do you use? TEM? PCM? EPA Level II? Which method for testing dust? Does the department sanction the use of microvacuum cassettes?
- The Washington Post quoted a DEP spokesman as rejecting the results of asbestos tests performed for the New York Environmental Law and Justice Project. Why? Which other methodologies would you accept?
- Many residents of lower Manhattan are unhappy with the clean-up guidance the city has provided. They say that early on, the city told them to clean their apartments with wet rags, despite not knowing the levels of asbestos in their apartments. What's your response?
- Even now, people are moving back into apartments that haven't been professionally tested or cleaned. What's the health risk from asbestos to those people? — *refer to D.O.H.*

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Traei Watson

Traei Watson, environmental reporter
USA TODAY

cc: CS, GR

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- 1) Indoor air testing for asbestos was the responsibility of the building owners or their representatives. In isolated cases, DEP did some indoor air samples for asbestos very early in the disaster.
- 2) Consistent with the above policy.
- 3) Not at this time. Need to find out from Legal if we can release building owners' consulting reports.
- 4) Indoor air testing for asbestos was the responsibility of the building owners, however, for other air contaminants (VOCs, heavy metals, acid gasses, PCBs, etc.) all health and environmental agencies agreed that if air contaminants from the World Trade Center were not found in the outside (ambient) air, then the same contaminants would not be found indoors.
- 5) The DEP is qualified to handle asbestos problems identified indoors. Indoor air quality has no standards, only guidelines as published by the USEPA.
- 6) No, we never said not to involve EPA with asbestos, however, DEP took the lead in all asbestos-related issues. DOH and ATSDR undertook an independent study of a segment of a building in the downtown area for asbestos and other particulate matter.
- 7) DEP used the EPA established method – using PLM for bulk and PCM/TEM for air. DEP stated in its September 14, 2001 advisory, and September 26, 2001 revision, that micro vacuum and/or wipe sampling are not recognized methods for sampling asbestos and should not be used. Bulk sample analysis (PLM) must be performed by laboratories with NYS ELAP accreditation.
- 8) Using a method not recommended by regulators.
- 9) The NYC DOH issued health advisories and clean-up recommendations based on asbestos results at the time. The results at the time indicated that the general public's health affects were very low. Testing since has indicated the same to be true (or we can refer to DOH if DOH agrees).
- 10)
 - a) Once again it was the building owners responsibility to make a professional assessment of their building. In cases where the public feels a building owner has been remiss, the public had been instructed to call to DEP's Help Line.
 - b) DEP is not in a position to determine a health risk that is the purview of DOH.