

**Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination,
New York City Department of Health,
New York City Department of Environmental Protection
Respond to the World Trade Center Disaster**

**FACT SHEET FOR ROUTINE CLEANING OF HOMES
Revised 02/15/02**

The collapse of the World Trade Center (WTC) caused a large amount of dust, soot, ash, and other building materials to enter into some buildings and homes in the surrounding area. The dust, etc. generated by the collapse of the WTC is comprised primarily of common building materials, which include components of concrete, silica, calcite, gypsum, mica, metals, fibrous glass, (a type of man-made mineral fiber), and asbestos. Because cleanup work continues at the site, dust can still be a concern for some residents, making regular and frequent cleaning important for the safe occupancy of buildings in the lower Manhattan area. Dust can irritate your eyes, nose and throat. Dust can also cause coughing, shortness of breath and wheezing in some people. The cleaning methods described in this fact sheet are appropriate for the routine removal of particulate and fibrous constituents of the dust. Additional information concerning the health effects of the dust constituents and the results of air monitoring being conducted by various governmental agencies may be found at the websites listed at the conclusion of this fact sheet. The following information provides guidance to tenants and building owners on routine cleaning responsibilities and procedures.

Building Owner Responsibilities

In September, building owners were advised to take the following steps prior to re-occupancy. Please refer to the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) links listed at the conclusion of this fact sheet for additional information on initial entry and re-occupancy advisories.

- Assess dust and debris for hazardous material contamination, including asbestos;
- Clean air circulation systems and water tanks;
- Clean building grounds and exteriors, including rooftops;
- Clean common indoor areas; and
- Ensure that general building services such as heat, water, electric, and gas were provided.

Due to changing conditions and continued activity at the WTC site, building owners should continue to:

- Periodically assess the condition of building exteriors and air conditioning systems for cleanliness;
- Periodically re-clean areas where necessary;
- Discuss building-related cleaning concerns with tenants and determine mutually satisfactory resolutions;
- Provide tenants information on how buildings were initially assessed and cleaned;

- Provide tenants with the results of any testing performed; and
- Follow the guidelines for proper cleaning described below.

Tenant Responsibilities

Many aspects of the general advisements issued in September also apply to tenants. Tenants are responsible for:

- Cleaning their own interior living spaces and tenancies once general and common building concerns that may interfere with interior living space cleanup have been addressed by the owner;
- Following the guidelines for proper cleaning described below;
- Sharing information with building owners.

The DOH and DFP will respond to any additional or continuing concerns or questions building owners and tenants may have, however, the minimum actions outlined here are essential for the safe occupancy of buildings in the lower Manhattan area. City agency contact information is listed below.

Routine Cleaning Procedures in Homes

The following are recommendations for routine cleaning of minimal dust accumulation or a light coating of dust:

Hard Surfaces and Non-Porous Materials

- Use a wet/damp cloth or wet/damp mop; or
- A high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum can also be used before wet wiping;
- DO NOT USE a broom, dust, or regular vacuum cleaner. A regular vacuum cleaner bag may throw the smaller dust particles from these surfaces into the air.

Carpets, Upholstery, and Other Materials that Cannot Be Cleaned with Wet Wiping

- Use a HEPA vacuum only;
- Wash fabrics with heavy accumulations of dust two times; and
- If you do not have a HEPA vacuum, ask your building management company for one. Additionally, the Red Cross may be able to provide financial assistance to you (if you live below Canal Street) for the purchase of a HEPA vacuum. For more information, call the Red Cross Disaster Relief Help Line at (877) 746-4987.

Disposal of Materials

- Dispose of waste water in sink or toilet;
- Wash dirty mop heads or cleaning cloths intended for reuse separately from regular laundry; wash these materials after each use; and
- Place damp/wet disposable materials in plastic bags for disposal.

Personal Protection

- After cleaning, wash hands before eating, drinking, and smoking;
- Those who wear contact lenses may consider removing their lenses while cleaning in order to avoid possible eye irritation; and
- Rubber gloves or work gloves may be worn to reduce the possibility of skin irritation while cleaning; and
- Some people have reported irritation from airborne dust when they clean. The dust can cause irritation of your nose, throat, and lungs. If you experience irritation while cleaning and wish to use a dust mask, you may use an N-95 type disposable dust mask. These masks can be found at most local hardware and home improvement stores.

Dust Suppression and Control

- Outdoor surfaces, such as terraces, with small accumulations of dust can be cleaned by HEPA vacuuming or by wet mopping/wiping if the surface type allows;
- When cleaning terraces, take precautions to prevent dust from falling to sidewalk or other areas below;
- Clean frequently to minimize dust accumulation;
- Remove shoes before going inside and wipe shoes with damp cloth to clean off dust;
- Wipe pets' paws with a damp cloth before they come inside;
- The use of a HEPA air purifying device in living areas can be an effective way of reducing the amount of dust in the air. The HEPA units are sold in various sizes depending upon room size and are available at local hardware and retail stores. Some units are equipped with charcoal or carbon filters that can remove minor, nuisance level odors. Additional information on the selection and purchase of residential air cleaning devices can be obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency's website at www.epa.gov/iaq/pub/resdair;
- Wash or change air conditioning filters on a frequent basis; and
- Seal gaps around windows and outer openings to prevent the introduction of dust and fine particles into the home.

For further information, please refer to the agency websites or telephone contacts listed below:

For World Trade Center Health Concerns:

New York City Department of Health

nyc.gov/health

(212) 213-1844

For Asbestos, Noise, and Environmental Concerns:

New York City Department of Environmental Protection

nyc.gov/dep

(718) DEP-HELP

For Professional Counseling Information and Referral Services:

Project Liberty
projectliberty.state.ny.us
1-800-LIFENET