

Kris Radkushin

718-595-3744

from Tom Mathe

DRAFT

9/15/01 11:43 (dkass)

**Public Health Advisory for People Re-Occupying Commercial Buildings and
Residents Re-Entering their Homes: Recommendations for Protecting Your Health**

What steps have building owners and managers taken to ensure building safety?

Before building owners and managers are permitted to allow residents and occupants to return, they have been required to assess and certify the stability and safety of their buildings. Specifically, no building may be re-occupied unless each of the following steps have been taken:

- 1) the structure has been thoroughly assessed for strength stability;
- 2) gas service has been checked and restored, with the help of Con Edison;
- 3) electrical service is operating, and any exposed wires or damaged fixtures have been repaired or removed;
- 4) building water service is operating, roof water tanks have been flushed and re-filled and cleaned, if necessary;
- 5) steam service has been checked and restored, where appropriate;
- 6) the building has been assessed for hazardous materials and if any have been found, they have been removed according to applicable regulations;
- 7) building mechanism systems have been inspected and cleaned and repaired, as necessary, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems;
- 8) the interior has been cleaned of dust and debris.

In addition, New York City is requiring building owners and managers to communicate with building occupants and be available to answer questions regarding building conditions. If you have questions about any of the above issues, you should contact your building owner, manager or superintendent.

What steps should I take upon returning to my workplace or home?

In a workplace, you should speak to your supervisors about how to prepare the workspace. It is possible that businesses have developed startup and cleaning procedures. In particularly dusty environments, it may be that cleaning needs to happen before equipment can be restarted. Follow the cleaning procedures discussed below.

In your home, you should check first make sure that conditions are safe. You should enter your home dressed in long sleeve shirts and pants, and with closed shoes. Upon entry:

- Check for the smell of gas. If the apartment smells of gas, leave immediately and report it to your building manager and to Con Edison.
- Check for broken glass and fixtures. Wrap any broken glass in paper and mark it "broken glass." If large pieces of glass are broken, ask your building superintendent for help.
- Run hot and cold water from each of the taps for at least two minutes, or until water runs completely clean, whichever is longer.
- Flush toilets until bowls are refilled. For air pressure systems, you may need to flush several times. If there are any problems with the toilet or plumbing system, call a plumber -- do not try to fix the problem yourself.
- Follow the cleaning procedures discussed below.

I have heard that asbestos was released from the collapse of the World Trade Center.

What is asbestos, and should I worry about it being present in my home?

Asbestos, a naturally occurring mineral, was used in the construction of the World Trade Center. The destruction of the World Trade Center buildings released large amounts of dust and ash, some of which contained asbestos.

Exposure to inhaled asbestos primarily affects the lungs. The risk of lung disease from the inhalation of asbestos fibers depends on the intensity and duration of exposure. In general, lung disease has resulted from intense asbestos exposure experienced over a period of many years, primarily in occupational settings. The risk of developing an asbestos-related illness following an exposure of short duration is low.

^{bulk}
City, State and Federal agencies have conducted dust samples and air samples since the World Trade Center collapse. Though most of the samples have no asbestos, some have found very small amounts of asbestos. These agencies have concluded that the dust is safe to treat as dirt, and does not need to be handled as a hazardous material. Even still, because the dust is very fine, the Department of Health is recommending that every effort be made to not let the dust get airborne.

has little potential to create airborne asbestos fibers

How should I clean my apartment when I move back in?

The best way to remove dust is to use a wet rag or wet mop. Sweeping with a dry broom is not recommended because it can make dust airborne again. Where dust is thick, you can directly wet the dust with water, and remove it layers with wet rags and mops. Dirty rags can be rinsed under running water, being careful to not leave dust in the sink to dry. When done, used rags and mops should be put in plastic bags while they are still wet and bags should be sealed and discarded (cloth rags can be washed, see instructions below). Rags should not be allowed to dry out before bagging and disposal or washing.

Because the dust particles are so small, standard vacuuming is not an efficient way to remove the dust and may put dust back into the air where it can be inhaled. HEPA (high efficiency particulate) ^{efficiency} filtration vacuums (i.e., HEPA vacuums) capable of trapping very fine particles are preferred. They are now widely available in stores and may be shared by more than one family. If a HEPA vacuum is not available, it is recommended that either HEPA bags or dust allergen bags be used with your regular vacuum.

Air

Carpets and upholstery can be shampooed and then vacuumed.

If your apartment is very dusty, you should wash or HEPA vacuum your curtains. Be careful if taking them down to prevent dispersion of dust in the air.

To clean plants, rinse leaves with water. Pets can be washed with running water from a hose or faucet; their paws should be wiped to avoid tracking dust inside the home.

How can I remove dust from the air?

Air purifiers may help reduce indoor dust levels. HEPA air purifiers are superior to other models in filtering the smallest particles. Air purifiers are only useful for removing dust from the air. They will not remove dust already deposited on floors, shelves, upholstery or rugs. Keep windows closed when using an air purifier.

Additional precautions include:

- Avoid sweeping or other outdoor maintenance;
- Keep dust from entering the home;
- Keep windows closed;
- Set the air conditioner to re-circulate air (closed vents), and clean or change the filter frequently;
- Remove shoes before entering the home for several days (once you first make sure there is no broken glass)

Do I need to wash all my clothes and linen?

Dusty clothes should be washed separately from other clothing. Wash heavily-soiled or dusty clothing or linens twice. Remove lint from washing machines and filters in the dryers with each laundry load.

What should I do with leftover food in my apartment?

The power outage in much of lower Manhattan may have caused refrigerated food to spoil. *Throw away* any food that is spoiled or may have been contaminated with dust, except for food in cans, jars, or containers with tight-fitting lids. Wash cans and jars with water and wipe it clean. **If in doubt, throw it out.**