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Statement of Robert Avaltroni

Deputy Commissioner

New York City Department of Environmental Protection

at a hearing of the New York State Assembly

concerning the environmental impacts on lower Manhattan of

the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States

**Monday, November 26, 2001
250 Broadway**



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NYCDEP Deputy Commissioner
November 26, 2001

Good morning Mr. Chairmen and Members. I am Robert Avaltroni, Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Compliance at the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. On behalf of Commissioner Miele, thank you for this opportunity to address the Committees on the subject of environmental impacts in lower Manhattan following the September 11th attacks on the United States.

As you can see, I am joined this morning by a group of colleagues from other agencies. The presence of so many agencies here this morning illustrates the team-oriented approach which has dominated the city, state and federal governments' response to the September 11th attacks. Beginning September 12th, health and environmental agencies met daily to discuss environmental health issues. These overall coordinating meetings continue three times a week at this point with related meetings and discussions taking place on a daily basis.

In the days immediately following September 11th, the focus of coordinating meetings was how to set up monitoring networks that could provide

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appropriate and relevant data to guide measures that could be taken to protect the public health and to establish standards and protocols for monitoring. In the interests of a coordinated response, we reviewed the technical resources each agency had to offer, agreed on the parameters we should be looking for, and arrived at a consensus on the frequency, duration and location of sampling, and how to interpret the data that we began generating by September 12th. In those cases where there were no established standards for monitoring a particular substance, the environmental and health officials agreed to adopt a standard which was strictly protective, such as using the indoor standard for outdoor air sampling of asbestos.

All agencies involved in the joint effort, including DEP, have submitted their data to EPA for coordination and EPA maintains a website with updated information on sampling. We have also posted the data collected on asbestos on DEP's website.

The data that all the agencies have collected has been evaluated by EPA and NYCDOH and, as you will hear, levels of contaminants in air and dust are not

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high enough or of sufficient duration to cause long-term health effects.

Since the initial period, the health and environmental officials have continuously reviewed and discussed data as the areas around the World Trade Center were reopened to the public to make sure that all standards of the environmental and health agencies were being met and to address any potential worker health and safety issues at Ground Zero. Discussions of the health and environmental agencies are now focused on what kind of monitoring network should be kept in place over a longer period of time. We look forward to hearing your views on the issue and we will certainly consider those views as we proceed.

Following my remarks, Dr. Jessica Leighton from the New York City Department of Health will discuss her agency's role in the monitoring program as well as their analysis of health impacts.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.