

Avaltroni, Robert

From: Radhakrishnan, Krish
Sent: Wednesday, May 08, 2002 11:36 AM
To: Avaltroni, Robert
Subject: FW:

FYI

-----Original Message-----

From: Radhakrishnan, Krish
Sent: Wednesday, May 08, 2002 12:02 PM
To: Maldonado, Jane
Subject:



statement.doc

Good afternoon. I am pleased to be here today with the EPA and our federal, state and city partners to announce the launch of a comprehensive program to allay the fears of Lower Manhattan residents concerned about possible asbestos contamination in their homes caused by the collapse of the World Trade Center. There are approximately 31,000 people living south of Canal Street, and none of them should have to live with concerns of the air they breathe. We are gratified that FEMA, through EPA and DEP, are providing emergency funding to allow residential dwellings to be cleaned and tested for asbestos. While our work to date has found minimal instances of asbestos in the buildings surrounding Ground Zero, we are confident that the measures announced today will help further reassure residents of Lower Manhattan of the safety of their living environment.

Immediately following the collapse of the Twin Towers, the City initiated cleanup activities of streets, sidewalks, and exterior common areas with EPA. Since September 11th, we have established an air monitoring network in and around Ground Zero to evaluate the ambient air quality on a continuing basis. Since January, DEP inspectors have been conducting an assessment of building exteriors. To date, approximately 800 buildings have been inspected to identify potential debris from the World Trade Center collapse on rooftops and facades. Where we have found exterior debris, it has formed into dense, cake-like deposits and in small amounts, and causes no significant risk to residents, workers or visitors. To ensure that it is cleaned up, and to ensure that residual debris poses zero risk to human health, the City, with the assistance of EPA, is in the process of cleaning up this material itself.

We have also been compiling indoor air samples from approximately 300 building owners in Lower Manhattan. Of the more than 121,000 samples submitted to date, only 1% has been above the established asbestos guidelines. In all these cases, a proper clean-up was conducted. DEP has responded to owner requests and citizen complaints about debris

in apartments with site visits to review interior and exterior conditions. To date, we have received 218 complaints regarding possible asbestos contamination in apartments; only one of these complaints has warranted a clean-up. We are confident that there is minimal reason for public concerns about the air in their homes. Regardless, we recognize that New Yorkers need to be assured that they are not being exposed to asbestos that might pose long-term health risks. Through the partnership of these agencies, we are pleased to be going forward with this program to offer professional cleaning and testing of residential units south of Canal Street river-to-river.

The scientific data about immediate health risks from short-term exposure to asbestos is reassuring, and in the few cases where it has been found in homes, professional clean-up has been completed. Unfortunately, there are few existing standards for indoor air quality and sampling protocols are still rudimentary at this point. The EPA Indoor Task Force is working to develop accurate evaluation criteria. As we conduct the necessary background studies, we will keep the public informed about any new information that is valuable in the short-term. By offering testing and clean-ups to all Lower Manhattan residents while continuing to evaluate local interior and exterior air quality, we aim to address the public's immediate concerns, while allowing us to ensure the long-term quality of air Downtown.

Many details of the program will be fleshed out in the weeks to come. The time frame for getting apartments cleaned will be determined by the number of people who request testing, but funding has been identified to clean all residential units, if necessary. DEP and the other local, state and federal agencies involved will make every effort to move this process forward quickly and efficiently. We are pleased that our federal partners -- the EPA and FEMA -- have taken this proactive step to offer New Yorkers peace of mind and ensure the safety and health of Lower Manhattan residents.