

Gilsenan, Michael

From: Jim Miller [jmill@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Monday, May 06, 2002 12:44 PM
To: Avaltroni, Robert; Gilsenan, Michael
Subject: 150 Franklin

The DN story from 5/2 states that DEP and EPA tested bulk dust from 150 Franklin (see below). If the story is accurate, the results were ND on PLM and >2% by TEM from rooftop and elevator shaft samples.

Did the DN get the story right? What should happen next?

http://nydailynews.com/2002-05-02/News_and_Views/City_Beat/a-149516.asp

Asbestos Fallout Is Found
 In Co-op Near WTC Site

By Juan Gonzalez

A seven-story co-op building half a mile north of Ground Zero was recently found to be contaminated with high levels of asbestos.

The building, at 150 Franklin St. in Tribeca, has housed a family-run child care center for years, and neither the child care center nor other tenants in the building evacuated their homes following the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

Like many people who live downtown, the building's tenants simply cleaned up the dust in their apartments and tried to return to normal.

Not until mid-April - seven months after the collapse of the twin towers - did the building's co-op board discover the high asbestos levels.

"Yes, there is an asbestos problem in the building," said Jim Stratton, a member of the board and the Democratic District leader for Tribeca.

"But the whole asbestos problem downtown was essentially hidden by EPA and the city, which kept assuring us the air was safe."

Tests in mid-April by the Environmental Protection Agency detected asbestos levels 2% and higher in dust samples. Two of those were on the roof of the building and two on the inside window ledges of an elevator shaft.

Any test results above 1% asbestos are considered hazardous by the EPA and require immediate asbestos removal by certified contractors.

Toddler Center Safe

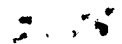
Stratton, whose wife operates the Treehouse toddler center out of the couple's apartment, insisted that "the children have not been exposed to anything," because no asbestos was found inside the toddler center.

The building's elevator, like many in the former warehouse buildings that dot Tribeca, has an iron gate instead of a solid door, and its shaft has windows that face the street.

Since several of the shaft's windows were broken on Sept. 11, dust from the trade center collapse may have easily penetrated the elevator area, Stratton conceded.

At the time, according to Stratton, the co-op board believed the assurances from EPA and city officials that air quality downtown was safe, so it did not conduct extensive testing within the building.

One of the co-op tenants, however, said she was worried about environmental hazards.



The dangers from asbestos, such as asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma, show up only after 15 or more years, and usually after long-term exposure.

Called for Help

The one tenant was worried enough that by mid-April she asked Joel Kupferman of the New York Environmental Law and Justice Project to come to 150 Franklin and collect dust samples.

Kupferman sent three samples to a laboratory. The lab results showed levels of 1.2%, 1.4% and 1.8% asbestos. He immediately notified the EPA and the city's Department of Environmental Protection, and those agencies analyzed new samples on April 18.

The DEP, using a crude analytical method called polarized light microscopy, detected no asbestos. But EPA scientists, using a more sophisticated method called transmission electron microscopy, found even higher levels, from 2% to 5% asbestos.

"We recommended that it be professionally cleaned," said EPA spokesperson Mary Mears.

According to several political and community leaders, 150 Franklin may not be an isolated case.

"For almost eight months now people in lower Manhattan who took the word of the EPA have been living in conditions that are potentially hazardous to their health," said Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-Manhattan) through a spokesman yesterday.

Nadler has been demanding for months that EPA test and cleanup the indoor spaces in every building near Ground Zero.

EPA Administrator Christie Whitman announced a plan recently to assist the city in cleaning the facades and roofs of buildings downtown, and her aides now say they are considering what to do about indoor spaces.