

Gilsenan, Michael

From: Chapin, Diana
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2002 11:04 AM
To: Sturcken, Charles; Gilsenan, Michael (ex); Ward, Chris
Subject: FW: NYCOSH Update - May 17, 2002

NYCOSH Update -
May 17, 2002

FYI, what NYCOSH is circulating.

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

From: Jessica Leighton [mailto:jleight@health.nyc.gov]
Sent: Sunday, May 19, 2002 10:49 AM
To: dianac@dep.nyc.gov; Callahan.Kathy@epamail.epa.gov; Andrew Goodman;
Benjamin Mojica; Deborah Nagin; Jim Miller; Jeanine Prudhomme; Kelly
McKinney; Nancy Jeffery; Roger Hayes; Thomas Frieden
Subject: Fwd: NYCOSH Update - May 17, 2002

fyi

Gilsenan, Michael

From: Jonathan Bennett [jbennett@nycosh.org]

Sent: Friday, May 17, 2002 10:01 AM

Subject: NYCOSH Update - May 17, 2002

NYCOSH UPDATE ON SAFETY AND HEALTH

Vol. VII, No. 6

Friday, May 17, 2002

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What's New in the NYCOSH Website

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Eight Months After World Trade Center Catastrophe, EPA Plans to Oversee Professional Cleanup of Lower Manhattan Residences

On May 8 the EPA abandoned its previous position that it had no responsibility for indoor spaces that were contaminated when the World Trade Center collapsed. The agency announced that in June it would begin a program to clean living quarters below Canal Street, upon the resident's request.

While many welcomed the EPA reversal, some public health activists also criticized it sharply as being "too little, too late."

Several hours after the EPA announced its reversal, NYCOSH published this statement:

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“However, it is a shame that these measures were not taken at a time when they could have prevented the heavy exposure to the toxic dust that covered Lower Manhattan. For nearly 8 months the EPA has denied that it has authority to protect people from exposure to toxic substances indoors,” said Shufro. “Now the EPA is taking responsibility for protecting Lower Manhattan residents – an action which it could have taken months ago.”

“The EPA should accept that responsibility, and announce a plan to clean up all indoor spaces, including workplaces and schools, of all WTC-related contamination,” said Shufro.

The EPA plan lacks any provision for oversight from outside the same government agencies that have shirked their responsibility for all this time. “We believe the plan must include the appointment of an independent advisory committee, including representatives of tenants, workers, students and elected officials, with the authority to intervene if government agencies are not acting to protect public health,” Shufro said.

The EPA plan would permit individuals to clean up asbestos contaminated dust by themselves, with EPA advice. For an untrained person to attempt such a cleanup is inappropriate – possibly creating a health hazard not only for themselves, but also for their neighbors.

The EPA plan lacks any provision for creating a health registry and for medical surveillance of people exposed to toxic substances in Lower Manhattan. A health registry and medical surveillance are absolutely essential.

Most Cars Caught in WTC Collapse Will Be Destroyed, but Others Face Uncertain Fate

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On May 13 the issue was partially settled when the EPA announced that more than 700 of the contaminated cars would be destroyed. But city Sanitation Department spokesperson Kathy Dawkins told NYCOSH that at least 68 cars are salvageable and will be returned to their owners after the city and EPA could reach an agreement on "how to make them safe, on whether they must be professionally cleaned or not."

According to EPA spokesperson Mary Mears, "The city has agreed that the 68 vehicles will have to be professionally abated before they are returned to the owners."

"There is no protocol for abating an asbestos-contaminated car," said NYCOSH executive director Joel Shufro, "and I remain troubled that the city and EPA would reach an agreement about releasing the cars without spelling out the protocol they will use for a professional abatement, one that is stringent enough to protect the health of any unsuspecting person who might buy such a car or be asked to repair one."

"When you're talking about interior carpets, upholstery and engine insulation, just to name three problem areas that might be contaminated with asbestos, there is no completely effective method of cleaning," said NYCOSH industrial hygienist Dave Newman. "All those materials must be removed and discarded, by workers who are trained, licensed and equipped to work safely with asbestos."

"On behalf of all the workers and the members of the general public who will come into contact with these cars, we are calling on the city and the EPA to subject the cars to stringent post-abatement clearance testing before they are released," said Shufro. "We will provide the government agencies involved with a detailed description of a minimally acceptable abatement and post-abatement clearance protocol."

If the cars are released with asbestos in their interiors and their ventilation systems, anyone riding in them will be exposed to cancer-causing asbestos dust. If they are released with asbestos lodged in the nooks and crannies of the engine or the body, anyone who ever repairs them will potentially be exposed to the dust. While the risk of adverse effect from such exposure is not high, it is elevated above normal levels.

In addition to the cars, there is a growing controversy about another 500 pieces of fire apparatus, which were returned to normal service without having been completely cleaned of dust from the collapse, as reported in the Daily News on May 15.

According to the Daily News, "'Our rig was parked on West St. right in front of the financial buildings and survived,' said a Manhattan firefighter, who asked not to be named. 'Every time we go on a run, it blows dust in our faces. It's not safe.' Union officials are adamant that all of the 500 or so fire vehicles used at Ground Zero — not just the trucks there on the first day — should be professionally cleaned. 'This is a serious health issue,' said Thomas Manley, health and safety officer of the Uniformed Firefighters Association. 'It's not being taken care of for one reason: money.'"

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Scammers Exploit Lower Manhattan Environmental Fears

Many New York City residents have recently received e-mail messages or leaflets telling them that they can get a "free" air conditioner, HEPA vacuum cleaner or air purifier by buying one and

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applying to FEMA for reimbursement. It isn't true.

FEMA has a program that is designed to assist Lower Manhattan residents who need to purchase equipment to improve air quality, but eligibility for the program is determined on a case-by-case basis. If an individual is found to be eligible, FEMA will issue a voucher to be applied to a purchase. "We do not reimburse anyone for a purchase they have already made," said FEMA spokesman James McIntyre. "If someone would like FEMA assistance, they must register first, and apply for a voucher," McIntyre explained. The number to call to register is 800-462-9029.

Is FEMA concerned about the scam? "We have vendors who take advantage of people when there is a disaster, and there isn't much we can do about it if they don't commit fraud," McIntyre told NYCOSH. "We put out press releases in New York to let people know it isn't a FEMA program in November and February and we investigate any complaints that we receive," he added.

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New York State Firefighters Win Safety Protection in Court

In an important ruling that is expected to promote safer working conditions for the 17,000 firefighters in New York State, the appellate division of the State Supreme Court ruled last week that a local government is financially liable if a firefighter is injured as a result of a condition that is a violation of OSHA safety and health regulations.

"In this case, McGovern v. The City of New York, the firefighter was burned because his personal protective equipment did not meet OSHA standards," explained attorney Michael Barasch. "The city argued and the lower court ruled that OSHA standards were irrelevant to deciding whether the employer is liable, which meant that employers could violate the standards without fear of significant financial consequences. This ruling finally makes it clear that fire departments in New York must comply with OSHA standards, and I'm hopeful that will result in better equipment and safer working conditions for firefighters throughout the state."

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NYCOSH Job Opening: Community Outreach & Liaison/Safety and Health Specialist

The New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health is seeking a community outreach & liaison/safety and health specialist to develop, coordinate and conduct safety and health programs for entry level workers, immigrants, migrants, non-English speaking workers, illiterate workers and recently employed inner city youth. The job includes outreach to community-based organizations and institutions, and production and distribution of appropriate safety and health materials. Candidate must be a self-starter, able to work independently and have a demonstrated record of organizing activity.

The New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health is a coalition of over 200 local unions and 350 individual safety and health activists in the New York metropolitan area. NYCOSH provides training and education about workplace safety and health hazards to its membership, community organizations and the public at large.

Qualifications:

- Fluency in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Haitian Creole, and/or Russian desirable
- Health and Safety background

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- Experience working with unions and community organizations
- Outstanding teaching skills
- Demonstrated ability to develop curricula and educational materials
- Organizational and program development skills
- Excellent writing and communication skills, computer literacy, typing

Responsibilities:

- Work with unions and community-based organizations to develop safety and health training programs
- Develop training materials, including curricula, fact sheets, and other resources
- Conduct safety and health training sessions for unions and community organizations
- Respond to inquiries regarding workplace hazards
- Participate in NYCOSH meetings and activities

Salary: \$47,300 - \$52,300 health and dental benefits; life insurance; pension.

Beginning date: Immediately. Applications processed upon receipt.

To apply, send resume to NYCOSH, Attention Joel Shufro, 275 Seventh Avenue, 8th Floor. New York NY 10001. Fax (212) 627-9812

NYCOSH is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer. NYCOSH especially encourages people of color to apply.

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Comings and Goings: Omar Henriquez, Marie Diven Stelluti

Omar Henriquez, coordinator of the NYCOSH Youth and Immigrant Project since October 2000, is leaving the NYCOSH staff to accept the position of immigration program coordinator for the Eastern Region of the Service Employees International Union. "Omar will be part of our national immigration policy team," said SEIU Eastern Region Campaign Support Director Bob Kirkman. "It is a dynamic program that focuses on immigrant rights and reform of government immigration policy. It is crucial to many of our members and to the labor movement as a whole, and we are extremely pleased that Omar has agreed to work with us."

NYCOSH assistant director Susan O'Brien commented: "Omar has helped NYCOSH reach a whole new level of providing safety and health-related training, information and advocacy to New York's huge community of immigrant workers. We look forward to expanding and deepening the program even further, building on the foundation that Omar helped to construct. We are very sorry that he will not be on our staff any more, but we are confident that our program will benefit from the work he does at SEIU."

Marie Diven Stelluti has been appointed Director of Policy, Development & Outreach for the Mt. Sinai - Irving J. Selikoff Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine, where she will be involved in strategic planning and serve as legislative and labor liaison for the Center, a diagnostic and treatment clinical service that is oriented toward preventive intervention of work-related diseases, such as asbestosis, lead poisoning and carpal tunnel syndrome. Stelluti is a long-time public policy and communications advisor working in New York City government, including recent work as director of public policy and communications/policy adviser to Bronx Borough President Fernando

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What's New in the NYCOSH Website

On the home page at <http://www.nycosh.org/>

Links to the latest news coverage in the local and national media of the growing controversy over safety and health hazards in lower Manhattan, including a major article in the latest Occupational Hazards, "Cleaning Up After 9/11: Respirators, Power and Politics."

In "The Clipping File" at <http://www.nycosh.org/clipping-file.html>

Links the recent safety and health-related news concerning asbestos-related disease, the "union safety effect," and much more. Of special interest: "A Killer's Stealthy Advance" from the May 9 Los Angeles Times and "EPA's Plan to Clean Up Insulation Is Too Limited, Some Say" from the May 10 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, both at <http://www.nycosh.org/clipping-file.html#anchor8166>

In "NYCOSH in the News" at <http://www.nycosh.org/NYCOSHNews/2002-april-News.html>

Fire Truck Danger: Union Says WTC Dust on Rigs a Health Risk - Daily News, May 15

EPA Rapped for NYC Cleaning Program - Associated Press, May 14

EPA to Clean WTC Apartments - United Press International, May 8

WTC Minority Workers' Ills Persist - Newsday, April 28

Trabajadores sin protección - Hoy, 8 de abril

and more than 30 other articles published in the media during 2002

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Calendar of Events

Wednesday, May 22, 7:30 pm

Lecture/Discussion: Toxic Fallout from the World Trade Center Catastrophe

When the World Trade Center towers fell, hazardous materials were released into the atmosphere, and the remaining dust contains carcinogens, including asbestos. The environmental aftermath has raised serious questions about who will be helped and who will be hurt as Downtown NYC is cleaned up and rebuilt. Who will benefit from new construction on the site, will it harm the environment, and will it meet job safety standards? With Paul Bartlett from the Center for Biology of Natural Systems at Queens College, Jonathan Bennett from NYCOSH and Joel Kupferman, the Environmental Justice Chair of the National Lawyers Guild - NYC Chapter, and the executive director of the NY Environmental Law Project.

Presented by New York Union for Radical Political Economics and the Brecht Forum at the Brecht Forum, 122 West 27th St., 10th floor , 212-242-4201 \$6/\$8/\$10 (sliding scale)

For a continuously updated listing of occupational and environmental safety and health events, visit the NYCOSH website's Calendar of Events at <http://www.nycosh.org/calendar.html>

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NYCOSH is a non-profit provider of occupational safety and health training, advocacy and information (including technical assistance and industrial hygiene consultation) to workers and

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unions throughout the New York metropolitan area. Our membership consists of more than 250 union organizations and 400 individuals: union members, health and safety activists, injured workers, healthcare workers, attorneys, public health advocates, environmentalists and concerned citizens. We provide the NYCOSH Update on Safety and Health to our members and others free of charge, despite the considerable time and money it takes to produce it. You could help by making a tax-deductible contribution of any amount. Please send your tax-deductible contribution to: New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, 275 7th Avenue, New York NY 10001, ATTN: Update. For more information, if you have information to share (including news clips and announcements of events), if you want to be added to our e-mail list, or if you want membership materials, call NYCOSH: 212-627-3900, or fax us: 212-627-9812, or e-mail us: nycosh@nycosh.org. For additional information see the NYCOSH website at <http://www.nycosh.org>.

Joel Shufro, Executive Director
Jonathan Bennett, Editor
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