

NEW YORK POST, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2001

New study bares asbestos threat

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An independent researcher confirms what New Yorkers have feared since the choreographed mayhem of Sept. 11: There's far more asbestos lingering in the air than the government would have us believe.

New air and ground samplings by HP Environmental reveal the force of the explosions scattered asbestos into fibers so tiny that they evaded the Environmental Protection Agency's original tests, Newsweek reports.

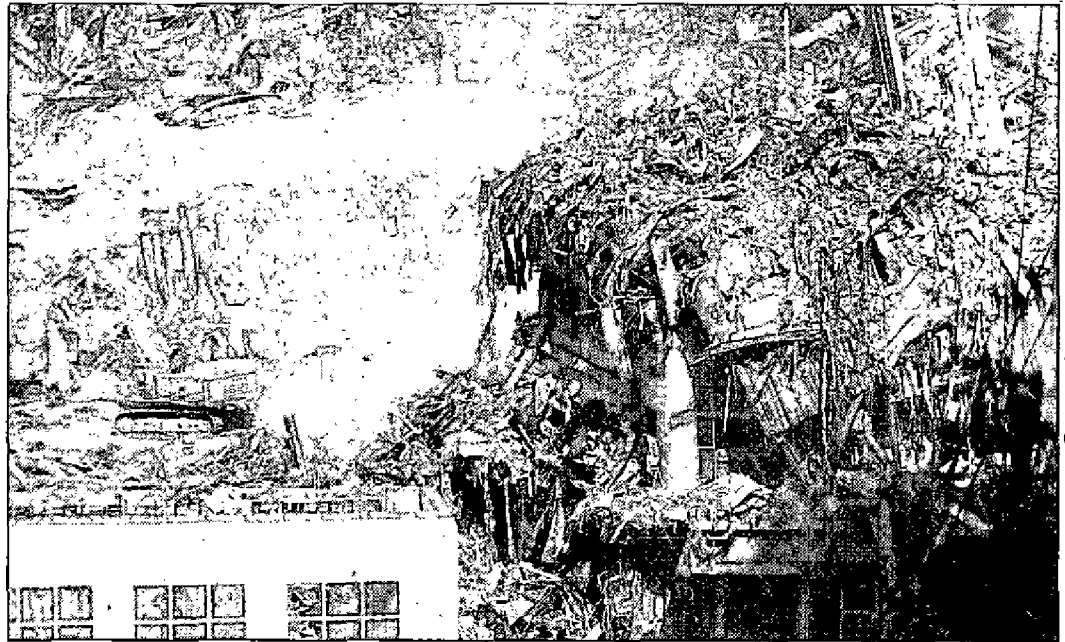
HP, a top toxicology firm, was hired by one of the cleanup companies to assess health risks to employees.

The new study concludes that the tiny fibers still dusting lower Manhattan are being missed by standard microscopy techniques.

"This stuff was just crushed, just pulverized," Newsweek quotes the lead author of the testing, Hugh Granger.

"As it turns out, when we now measure and look for these very small fibers in the air and buildings, we find them, and we find them in uniquely elevated concentrations."

Granger said he found asbestos within several blocks of ground zero, even inside undamaged buildings nearby and as high up as 36 floors.



NOT BREATHING EASY: Air tests indicate there's more asbestos in the air from ground zero than the EPA led New Yorkers to believe, Newsweek reports. Brigitte Stelzer

He said smaller fibers cause a greater threat than larger particles because they can travel miles through the air.

Following the Sept. 11 attack, EPA chief Christie Whitman downplayed the danger to people living near ground zero.

"Right now, there's no im-

mediate threat to people outside the ground-zero area," she said.

But samples The Post took from some clothing two days after the disaster revealed a concentration rate of 1.5 fibers per cubic centimeter — almost twice the rate considered safe.

City Health Commissioner Dr.

Neal Cohen yesterday again denied that there were health risks to New Yorkers.

"The repeated testing done at the site as well as beyond the site has consistently shown that all the health and safety standards for asbestos have been met," he said.

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