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SAD TASK FOR VICTIMS' KIN

Start to file for death certificates

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Hundreds of anguished kin took the first step toward admitting the once-unthinkable and declaring their loved ones dead yesterday — as Mayor Giuliani pledged to give each family ashes from the World Trade Center rubble.

Angry and frustrated, weeping but still grasping some glimmer of hope, members of the somber group talked with volunteer lawyers at the makeshift "family center" at Pier 94 on Manhattan's West Side.

They provided ID and answered such questions as: When was the last time you had heard from your loved one? And: What efforts have you made to locate that person?

"She was my only daughter. Yesterday was her birthday," said Barbara Sohan, 57, of 32-year-old Astrid.

The young woman worked as a technical support officer at Marsh & McLennan on the 95th floor of the north tower when it crashed down in the Sept. 11 terror strike.

"It was very difficult for me and still is difficult," Sohan said. "But I have to find a way to move on.

"I am hoping this is going to help me. I don't know," she said.

Still, she wasn't ready to concede Astrid was gone for good.

"I still have some hope. She is my only daughter. I have to hope," she said.

Clyde Frazier Sr., 63, admitted that he only grudgingly came to the center to go through the heartbreaking motions of declaring his son, Clyde Jr., 41, legally dead.

His son was working as an investigator with the state Department of Taxation and Finance in the center.

"There is no closure on this. There is no getting better. There is nothing anybody can do for me that will make me feel better," Frazier said.

"I can't even tell you how I have suffered and how I still continue to suffer and how many tears I have cried."

Still, he added, "I haven't given up. My son was healthy. If anyone can come out of there [alive], Clyde Frazier Jr. can."

The only five survivors to be plucked from the rubble so far were rescued on the first day. Nearly 6,400 people are listed as missing.

Giuliani, who has acknowledged that it would take a miracle for another person to be brought out alive, addressed another grim reality yesterday: It's likely most of the bodies won't be recovered.

Only 300 bodies, including those of four still-unidentified firefighters pulled out Tuesday have been found after 15 days, he noted. That's fewer than 5 percent of the estimated dead.

That dismal statistic has prompted the city to pledge to offer some of the ashy remains of the devastation to each family, the mayor said.

"We will give every family something from the World Trade Center, from the soil and from the ground, so that they can take it with them," he said.

An estimated 1.2 million tons of debris was left at the site from the attacks.

Yesterday, about 9,000 workers and 3,500 volunteers continued to toil around the clock at ground zero to remove it. Crews then hauled truckloads of the mangled mess onto barges headed for the Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island.

The total cleanup may take about eight months, federal officials said.

As the work continued, the lingering hope that loved ones may be alive had some relatives still refusing to file for a death certificate — for now.

"My sister-in-law is very depressed. She is coming to see a counselor here. I don't think she is ready to file a death certificate," said Julia Rosario, whose brother, 47-year-old Isidro Dario, was a cook at Windows on the World.

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