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Giuliani's Fund for Uniformed Survivors Has Yet to Disburse Any of $100 Million

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New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani moved quickly after the attack on the World Trade Center to begin collecting charitable donations, but has been much slower to begin distributing the money.

The mayor's Twin Towers Fund has raised nearly $100 million, making it one of the largest funds pledged specifically to aid families of firefighters, police officers and other uniformed personnel killed in the rescue effort. But while other funds have begun to provide assistance to the victims' survivors, the Twin Towers Fund has yet to write its first check, or even to announce plans to do so.

Larry Levy, deputy counsel in Mr. Giuliani's office, said he was satisfied that the immediate needs of the rescue workers' families had been met and that the Twin Towers Fund would provide long-term assistance. He added that the fund, because it is new, doesn't have a staff or procedures in place yet and that he and other city officials, including the mayor, have been very busy.

"We have not disbursed funds," Mr. Levy said. "It's difficult to figure out how to get the money to the people. We're working on that."

The president of the International Association of Fire Fighters, based in Washington, said the delay threatens to undermine the credibility of the charitable relief efforts, and that the families of the 343 firefighters who are dead or missing need the cash now. The union's New York Fire 9-11 Relief Fund has distributed two checks of $10,000 each to each of the families, the first within 14 days of the disaster. The union's fund has distributed about $7 million of the $70 million raised so far. The Red Cross and the September 11 Fund also have started distributing money.

"I am concerned that the families need resources and support now," said Harold Schaitberger, the union's general president. "It will become an issue if we don't see some specific plan for disbursement of funds."

The emerging controversy over distributing Mr. Giuliani's charity fund could add to the existing tension between the mayor and firefighters. That tension erupted in a brawl at the Ground Zero disaster site last week when firefighters protested Mr. Giuliani's decision to reduce the number of rescue workers seeking to recover the bodies of their fallen colleagues. Mr. Giuliani said he was doing so for safety reasons, but the firefighters have accused him of trying to hurry the cleanup of the site.

A police representative also is frustrated. "The mayor's fund, what a joke that is. Not one nickel of that money has been dispensed," said Frank Ferreyra, president of New York's state Fraternal Order of Police. "They're raising money in the name of the police officers and firefighters, but where is the accountability for that money?" Mr. Ferreyra, a retired New York City police lieutenant, said his organization has provided $250,000 to the families of 22 of the 60 police officers who are missing.

State and federal legislators are beginning to demand accountability for the approximately $1.2 billion that has been raised for the relief efforts, an unprecedented outpouring of charity that has brought with it greater scrutiny. In Congress, one House subcommittee is set to hold hearings on the matter today; another will take up the issue on Thursday.

"The public thought a lot more was going to go for immediate needs and that's what the uproar is about," said Daniel Borochoff, president of the American Institute of Philanthropy, a watchdog group in Bethesda, Md.

Firefighters and other rescue workers killed in the line of duty do have other sources of assistance, including a one-time payment from the federal government that last month was raised to $250,000. Firefighters' families continue to receive paychecks, but many have lost the income from moonlighting or spouses who may have worked but now have to stay home.

Mr. Levy, of the mayor's office, said any funds left over after meeting the needs of uniformed personnel would go to other victims of the tragedy. Mr. Giuliani will continue to oversee the Twin Towers Fund even after he leaves office at the end of his term in January.

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