NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEWSDAY, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2001

Workers at Ground Zero Begin Removal of Coolant

By Joshua Robin
STAFF WRITER

Ground Zero workers last night were to begin carefully removing the hazardous coolant that once powered the World Trade Center's air conditioning system, which has been precariously buried since Sept. 11.

Delicately wielding hoses, the two-man crew planned to remove an estimated 8,000 pounds of chlorodifluoromethane, more commonly known as Freon. The refrigerant is stored in two containers five stories beneath the earth.

Some Freon already has leaked from the ruins, and the frequent rattling by earth-moving equipment at Ground Zero is threatening to unleash more. No injuries from Freon inhalation have been reported.

The coolant was to be loaded into a mobile carrier known as the Zugibeast, named after Kevin Zugibe, president of the Pearl River-based firm doing the extrication. The firm, Hudson Technologies Inc., will then dispose of it.

A Zugibeast can hold 30,000 pounds of Freon.

The operation is expected to last all week, Zugibe said.

"We've done much bigger, but this is a whole different type of situation in that it's buried," Zugibe said in an interview before departing for Ground Zero. "We had to break through the concrete walls to get through to it."

If the delicate operation fails, the refrigerant could be released into the air, depleting oxygen. Zugibe said the chemical already has leaked in some places in the rubble, but there have not been any known effects on workers.

Hudson specializes in the emergency removing of large refrigeration systems, like those found in Navy aircraft carriers and submarines.

CITY_21MC100_011833735

NYC-WTC_000415515