

NY agencies grapple with city's health crisis

By John Price

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA)—Working closely with city, state and federal agencies since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the New York City Department of Health has been conducting several public health activities in response to the World Trade Center disaster.

Foremost among these activities is monitoring the air quality in the vicinity of the World Trade Center. While search and rescue efforts continue at the site, DOH is collaborating with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection to test and monitor the air that is still visibly saturated with pockets of dust and smoke.

"Tests are ongoing, but thus far, tests have shown asbestos levels that are below the threshold of concern," reported DOH officials in a statement released earlier this week.

"Nonetheless, workers who are involved in the recovery mission have been equipped with half-face masks and goggles, as well as protective clothing to reduce exposure to any particulate matter including dust," reported the Health De-

partment.

So far, based on the asbestos tests received, "the general public's risk for any short or long-term, adverse health effects are very low," said DOH officials.

Recently, the American Lung Association of New York launched a respiratory information hotline (1-800-LUNG-USA) to provide information and resources to people whose lung health has been affected by the World Trade Center attack.

"[The Sept. 11th disaster] has exposed many New Yorkers and volunteers in the relief effort to smoke and pollutants that could exacerbate existing lung diseases and possibly cause new respiratory symptoms in some people," said Dr. Lester Blair, president of the American Lung Association of New York and Associate Chief of Medicine at NYU Downtown Hospital.

Dr. Blair said the American Lung Association has also created an emergency respiratory assistance fund to provide financial support to uninsured people who have been affected by the disaster and whose physicians have prescribed oxygen, equipment, or medications to treat related respiratory illnesses.

"Anyone who is experi-



Emergency personnel work along Canal Street to clear the debris of the Sept. 11 attacks.

encing respiratory symptoms such as difficulty breathing, wheezing, persistent cough, or finding it painful to breath

deeply should contact their physician immediately," said Dr. Blair.

Respiratory symptoms resulting from smoke and contaminants can occur as late as 48 hours after exposure, said Blair. "Everyone who has worked in the area of the disaster should pay particular attention to their breathing for days after their work is done," he said.

The Health Department has established a Public Health Advisory for residents and people returning to work near the blast zone. "Residents and workers are advised to guard against dust and soot which can cause respiratory symptoms and eye and throat irritation," advised health officials.

Health agencies have also been monitoring water quality in the area around the ground zero. Test results of the area north of the blast zone are within acceptable limits," said DOH officials. They also said "tests are ongoing."

Environmental investigators are working with local

restaurant owners and operators of other permitted food establishments to ensure safety of food served. DOH is also overseeing the distribution of food served to rescue workers.

Currently, the Health Department is also conducting a survey of the blast zone and the surrounding areas of lower Manhattan to assess the impact of the blast on rodent activity. City health officials are currently planning to mobilize inspectors, exterminators and clean-up crews to abate conditions that provide rodents with food and habitat.

Health Commissioner Neal L. Cohen, M.D., recently announced recommendations for building owners and individuals who are re-entering their businesses or homes for the first time since last week's disaster.

"As some buildings near the World Trade Center may have sustained structural damage, experienced power loss, and/or been subject to migrating dust and debris

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Harlem Hospital counsels affected New Yorkers

By John Price

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA)—In the unknown psychological aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania that has possibly claimed over 5,000 lives, Harlem Hospital is offering psychological support services and post-traumatic stress debriefings for victims, family members, children and health care workers.

The hospital's psychiatric staff warned that a traumatic incident sometimes takes days for full impact and that many people have been profoundly affected.

"The World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the Pennsylvania tragedy have had a tremendous impact in the Harlem community that has not as yet been fully realized," said Dr. Glendon Henry, medical director at Harlem Hospital Center.

"There may be a tendency to underestimate the impact of these events on the physical psychological and emotional well-being," said Dr. Henry.

The National Mental Health Association (NMHA) has likewise cautioned the disaster's psychological aftermath poses a unique health concern for those who have already experienced trauma in the past.

"Many more people than were involved [in the attacks] will suffer psychological harm. People who have suffered trauma in the past are especially vulnerable," said a recent statement issued by the NMHA.

Researchers have found that between 10 and 30 percent of people who directly experience trauma—such as those who escaped the collapsing World Trade Center's Twin Towers—experience post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD).

Others may experience acute stress syndrome, which tends to surface within four weeks of a traumatic event. According to the American Psychiatric Association, the symptoms of acute stress syndrome—feelings of terror, intrusive thoughts, anxiety and nightmares—typically last less than a month.

Since the tragedy, the Harlem Hospital Center—a member of the Generations Plus Northern Manhattan Health Network, which includes Metropolitan and Lincoln Hospitals—has held continuous counseling sessions for staff and patients.

"We encourage all com-

munity residents to realize that they may feel a variety of symptoms," said Dr. Henry, noted that the hospital has also conducted intensive outreach services to connect residents to "essential psychological services."

John Price writes for The New York Amsterdam News.

PUBLIC NOTICE

**CLARK COUNTY ("URBAN COUNTRY"),
HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS
PROGRAM (HOME), LOW INCOME
HOUSING TRUST FUND (LIHTF) GRANTS
FY 2002/2003**

HOME/LIHTF application forms will be available beginning Monday, October 1, 2001 at the Clark County Community Resources Management Division, 5th Floor, Clark County Government Center, 500 South Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada 89106. Applications will also be available via Clark County internet under Finance at: http://www.co.clark.nv.us/finance/crm/HOME/HOME_Index.htm.

The HOME Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. LIHTF funds are available to the Clark County (Urban County) HOME Consortium by the State of Nevada. The LIHTF and HOME funds received by the Consortium may be used for affordable housing projects that serve low-income residents who live anywhere in Clark County.

**GRANT APPLICATIONS CAN BE MADE ONLY BY
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITIES, NOT BY INDIVIDUALS OR
BY FOR-PROFIT FIRMS.**

An informational workshop to answer questions on the HOME/LIHTF application process will be held on Friday, October 5, 2001, 9:00-11:00 a.m., at the Clark County Government Center in Training Room #3, 1st Floor, 500 South Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas.

For more information regarding the HOME/LIHTF Program, please call Mr. Mike Pawlak, (702) 455-5025.

The deadline for submitting completed HOME/LIHTF applications is Wednesday, October 31, 2001 at 5:00 p.m. **No exceptions will be made. No extensions will be granted.**

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