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Respiratory Diseases: Results of 9/11 Rescue and Recovery Effort

Isabel Schnittker
inshbp@umsystem.edu

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Al-Qaeda attacked the United States on September 11, 2001.

Introduction
• First responders participated in the rescue and recovery effort at Ground Zero.
• First responders inhaled particulate matter (PM).
• The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) claimed that asbestos levels in the air were not hazardous.
• Many first responders did not wear respiratory protective equipment (RPE).
• Many first responders became ill and died.

First responders searched through debris at Ground Zero.

Sources
• Tillet, Emily and Grace Segers. “After hundreds of first responder deaths.”
• WTC Health Program. “What conditions are covered.”
• WTC Health Program. “Program Statistics.”

Research Findings
• Many first responders developed aerodigestive disorders (e.g., GERD, COPD, and asthma).
• James Zadroga was the first NYPD officer to die of respiratory failure.
• Congress passed the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act in 2010.
• The Zadroga Act funded the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund (VCF).
• The 9/11 VCF provided first responders with medical treatment and financial assistance.
• In 2019, comedian Jon Stewart and first responders convinced Congress to extend funding for the 9/11 VCF.
• Politicians hesitated to support the 9/11 VCF because of its cost.

Conclusion
• As of 2021, 37,338 living and 1,378 deceased first responders have reported aerodigestive disorders.
• The government failed to warn and protect first responders.
• Congress neglected to take timely legislative action.
• Politicians demonstrated that they valued money over human lives.
• Jon Stewart highlighted these politicians’ moral hypocrisies.