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

Isabel Schnittker (Advisor: Rob Wilson, Ph.D.)



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



First responders searched through debris at Ground Zero.

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.

Sources

- Crane, Michael et al. "Health Effects of the World Trade Center 9/11 Disaster." 813–825.
- Isaacson, Julie. "Terrorism and Mass Toxic Torts." 509–511.
- Tillet, Emily and Grace Segers. "After hundreds of first responder deaths."
- WTC Health Program. "What conditions are covered."
- WTC Health Program. "Program Statistics."



Jon Stewart and first responders testified before Congress.

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 hypocrisy.