

NEW YORK POST

PA HOLDING TIGHT TO \$650M IN 9/11 WAR

By SUSAN EDELMAN



October 21, 2007 -- The Port Authority is sitting on \$650 million in liability insurance that can help settle the claims of sick World Trade Center recovery workers, The Post has learned.

The agency's coverage, which officials confirmed last week, would be added to the city's \$1 billion insurance fund available to compensate firefighters, cops, construction workers and others who prove they have toxic injuries from Ground Zero.

Mayor Bloomberg said last week he's willing to begin settlement talks to end the city's legal war with the 9/11 responders.

The Port Authority's release of the insurance money could speed a settlement.

"That would go a long way toward helping to resolve this litigation," said Marc Bern, a lawyer for 9,000 city employees and other WTC workers.

Lawyers for sick workers blame the city and the Port Authority, which owned the WTC, for alleged safety violations during the cleanup.

Labor laws say a landlord must provide a safe place to work.

The agency declined to comment, but has argued in court that it did not control the cleanup, which was run by the city's Department of Design and Construction.

After 9/11, Congress passed a law capping the Port Authority's liability for damages stemming from the terror attacks at \$650 million, its maximum insurance coverage.

"Congress intended to compensate the workers while also protecting the Port Authority from exposure above their insurance," said David Worby, a lawyer for the workers. "The Port Authority's policy decision is to hurt the workers - not pay them."

The law capped the city's liability at \$350 million, a sum the lawyers contend would also add to the pot.

Ken Feinberg, the lawyer who managed the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund, estimated last year that \$1.5 billion is "more than sufficient to pay all eligible claims."

But a spokesman for Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) said more is needed.

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