



CANCER HITS 283 RESCUERS OF 9/11

By SUSAN EDELMAN

June 11, 2006 -- Since 9/11, 283 World Trade Center rescue and recovery workers have been diagnosed with cancer, and 33 of them have died of cancer, says a lawyer for the ailing responders.

David Worby, a lawyer for 8,000 World Trade Center responders, including cops, firefighters and construction workers, said the cases blood-cell cancers such as leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's and myeloma.

Doctors say the cancers can strike three to five years after exposure to toxins such as benzene, a cancer-causing chemical that permeated the WTC site from burning jet fuel.

"One in 150,000 white males under 40 would normally get the type of acute white blood-cell cancer that strikes a healthy detective," said Worby, whose first client was NYPD narcotics cop John Walcott, now 41. Walcott spent months at Ground Zero and the Fresh Kills landfill. The father of three is fighting leukemia.

"We have nearly 35 of these cancers in the family of 50,000 Ground Zero workers. The odds of that occurring are one in hundreds of millions," Worby said.

Others suffer tumors of the tongue, throat, testicles, breast, bladder, kidney, colon, intestines, and lung, said Worby, of Worby, Groner, Edelman, & Napoli, Bern, which filed the class-action suit.

WTC workers who have died of cancer include paramedic Deborah Reeve, 41 (mesothelioma); NYPD Officer Ronald Weintraub, 43 (bile-duct cancer); and Stephen "Rak" Yurek, 46, a Port Authority emergency technician (brain cancer). The families say they were healthy before 9/11.

Dr. Robin Herbert, a director of WTC medical monitoring at Mount Sinai Hospital, said some of the nearly 16,000 responders screened to date are getting cancer.

"We do not know at this point if they are WTC-related, but some are unusual cancers we see as red flags," Herbert said.

Dr. Iris Udasin, principal investigator for the Mount Sinai screening of 500 in New Jersey, said the 9/11 link is "certainly a possibility," she said. "It's what we worry about, and what we fear."

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