

NEW YORK POST

9/11 'SLAY' FRAY

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May 25, 2007 -- A city ruling classifying the death of a woman from toxic Ground Zero dust a homicide falls under a "different category" than people who got sick working at the site days and weeks later, Mayor Bloomberg said yesterday.

"This was something that took place on that day" of the World Trade Center attacks, Bloomberg said yesterday of Felicia Dunn-Jones, a 42-year-old federal employee from Staten Island who died of lung-scarring sarcoidosis five months after she was caught in the toxic plume on 9/11.

"Think of it as though somebody had a beam fall on them and it just took a while for them to succumb to their injuries, not somebody who was injured the next day if a beam fell on them in the cleanup," he said. "That's a very different situation."

After a push by her family and a new study revealing a link between WTC dust and sarcoidosis, the city medical examiner on Wednesday said exposure to the dust contributed to Dunn-Jones' death, and he added her to the roster of 9/11 victims, which is now 2,750.

But Bloomberg suggested the case is unrelated to thousands of rescue workers who say they've fallen ill from exposure and have been fighting for benefits.

"There are different categories here," he said, but added, "It's not to take anything away from those who succumbed to health effects elsewhere," such as rescue workers.

But Michelle Godbee, the widow of NYPD Officer James Godbee - who worked for at least 10 days near Ground Zero after the attacks and died of sarcoidosis in December 2004 - wants her husband's death treated the same way.

"[His death] should be reclassified, and there are other people out there who are going through the same thing I went through right now," said Godbee, who recently won a long-fought case for widow's benefits with the police pension board.

David Worby, a lawyer who filed a class-action suit against the city claiming thousands of people have contracted WTC-related illnesses, said he will likely seek reclassifications in sarcoidosis cases.

"I did get a call so far from one of the families saying, 'What do we have to do' " to get reclassified, he said. "I got two other calls from people saying, 'If I die, I want the medical examiner [doing an autopsy]."

Marianne Pizzitola, a benefits consultant for the uniformed Emergency Medical Service officers union, said one of her members has sarcoidosis, is on 13 medicines and has been fighting for a pension that she still hasn't been granted.

Officials with the ME's office said they only have jurisdiction to reclassify someone who died within the five boroughs, and they'll review any case if a family asks - but that no one has yet.

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