

New York Daily News - <http://www.nydailynews.com>**Rescuers face crisis - report**

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Thousands of Ground Zero rescue and recovery workers are still suffering from serious health problems from breathing toxic dust and smoke, a preliminary report by Mount Sinai Medical Center shows.

The World Trade Center Medical Monitoring Program's draft report, obtained by Channel 4, cites "highly prevalent, severe and persistent" health effects among many of the more than 9,000 rescue and recovery workers it tracked.

The report underscores what could be an exploding health care crisis for rescue and recovery workers, as well as people who lived or worked near the twin towers.

Last month, in an editorial series, the Daily News warned of the burgeoning epidemic among 9/11 heroes and called upon all branches of government to provide for their care.

Hospital officials insisted yesterday that the report is a draft and is not complete. "This paper is undergoing scientific expert peer review, which is not yet complete," said Mount Sinai spokeswoman Lauren Woods.

Still, the draft concludes that rescue and recovery workers - most from emergency services, law enforcement or the construction industry - are sicker than the general population five years after 9/11.

Mount Sinai's program found sharp increases in respiratory and pulmonary symptoms after 9/11, including abnormal lung capacity in a third of the workers one to two years after exposure, and lung problems 500% above those in the general population.

"This report only confirms what I've been saying all along," said David Worby, the Westchester attorney representing more than 8,000 rescue and recovery workers and their survivors in a class action suit against the city. "The time for denial is over."

The Mount Sinai draft report did not address cancer cases, though it predicted cases may begin to appear in the next five to 10 years. Worby said he is already seeing hundreds of cancer cases he believes are related to the rescue and recovery efforts.