

# Her death may not be in vain

MEDICAL EXAMINER'S RULING ON

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WTC WORKERS

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Oates for News

Joseph Jones places a rose by the name of his wife, Felicia Dunn-Jones, at the 9/11 memorial in St. George, S.I.

**Audio File: Listen to Arthur Browne, Daily News editorial page editor, speak about Felicia Dunn-Jones with National Public Radio's Robert Siegel**

The medical examiner's new ruling that World Trade Center dust helped kill a downtown lawyer may benefit thousands of Ground Zero workers who blame the toxic plume for their ailments. "This is a huge breakthrough," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-Manhattan). Marc Bern, an attorney who represents more than 9,000 plaintiffs injured after working in the twin towers rubble, called the ruling "very, very significant to all of the men and women who were volunteers at the WTC site after the collapse."

Medical Examiner Charles Hirsch reversed course last week and ruled that the death of civil rights attorney Felicia Dunn-Jones was caused in part by exposure to Trade Center dust as she fled the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. On



Felicia Dunn-Jones

Wednesday, Dunn-Jones of Staten Island was declared the 2,750th victim of the terror strike. Bern noted that the medical examiner's position reverses the city's previous insistence that the dust had not been medically linked to a single death.

"It is significant because the city had been denying the link between many of the respiratory diseases and their potential fatal impact as a result of their [workers'] exposure at the World Trade Center," Bern said.

The medical examiner's finding can now be used against the city to bolster the case that the dust could cause death, said several lawyers with ongoing negligence lawsuits.

"Hopefully, it'll permit them to realize that which they've been denying - that they should stop paying their lawyers and start paying the victims," said plaintiffs' attorney David Worby.

Angelo DeBiase, whose son, Mark, died after being sent to the Trade Center ruins on Sept. 11 to restore cell phone service, hoped the ruling would be helpful.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed because I have a young widow and three young grandsons who were devastated by this," he said.

Still, Mayor Bloomberg insisted yesterday that the ruling would not bolster the many lawsuits pending against the city, calling the circumstances leading to Dunn-Jones' death different from workers and volunteers on The Pile.

"It's just different categories," Bloomberg said. "The medical examiner said this was not a case of somebody who went and worked down there and contracted a disease."

But it was the same dust.

After Dunn-Jones died Feb. 10, 2002, the medical examiner ruled her death was due to natural causes attributed to scarring of the lungs caused by sarcoidosis.

Her family believed otherwise, and last year Reps. Maloney and Vito Fossella (R-S.I.) asked Hirsch to reconsider in light of new evidence linking respiratory illness to Trade Center dust.

Last week, Hirsch changed his mind. While he didn't blame Dunn-Jones' sarcoidosis on the plume, finding she probably had it before Sept. 11, Hirsch declared that "beyond a reasonable doubt that exposure to WTC dust was harmful to her" and was "contributory to her death."

Yesterday on Staten Island, Dunn-Jones' husband, Joseph, placed a rose on the 9/11 memorial in St. George where her name is inscribed and predicted the ruling could help reopen the victims compensation fund to those who worked at Ground Zero.

"Maybe this will expedite everything as far as them getting the medical treatment that they need, specifically for civilians that were there that day," he said.

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