

Claire Calladine
9/11 Health Now
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Good evening, my name is Claire Calladine and I am the Executive Director and co-founder of 9/11 Health Now. I met 9/11 Health Now's other co-founder David Miller on 9.11.07 at a First Responder benefit, where he was speaking out on behalf of the 9/11 Community. David is a wonderful speaker: eloquent, forceful, bold... but he kept pausing for breath at the podium and to clear his lungs. He was also hooked up to a portable oxygen machine that he breathed through as he spoke. The reason was that David had been diagnosed with Mesothelioma-an incurable asbestos-related lung cancer that normally takes decades to develop. David had been diagnosed with it in 2005, 3 1/2 years after his World Trade Center (WTC) service as a member of the New York Army National Guard.

David's other ailments included head and neck cancer, skin cancer, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, hypertension, Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease, chronic sinusitis, and PTSD-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, all of which he attributed to his World Trade Center service. Listening to David from the audience, I was shocked. Here was a 41 year-old man who should be in the prime of life--who was, in fact, in the prime of life going into Ground Zero--but who was now, a mere six years later, a walking encyclopedia of illness.

If you talk to any of the other sick responders, you realize that--like David--they all have *multiple* ailments. A responder will not just have cancer, they will have cancer, reflux disease, asthma, and a case of PTSD so severe they have not had a decent nights' sleep in 8 years. In fact, the Mt. Sinai WTC Medical Monitoring and treatment program has found that 61% of responders have multiple conditions. Why? It was because the poisons the responders were exposed to at Ground Zero were not selective. They were inhaled by the lungs and absorbed by the skin to travel within a responder's bloodstream, inflicting damage upon every system in the body.

The fact is: the World Trade Center site was so toxic that no man, woman or living creature should have been allowed to venture near it, let alone on top of it, without a full Hazmat suit and respirator. Yet, tens of thousands of people on The Pile, and hundreds of thousands of workers, residents and students of Lower Manhattan were all exposed to its caustic damage by the judgement call of a government who had decided to sacrifice a sector of the population in the name of keeping a city and the financial center of the world up and running. It was a decision that now affects at least half a million, and possibly up to one million people.

In February of 2007, an 83-page report was submitted to NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg entitled *Assessing the Health Effects of 9/11*. In that report, the World Trade Center Health Registry estimated that 410,000 people were 'heavily' exposed to WTC toxins. We in the 9/11 health field believe that number could well be double. One just has to look at aerial photographs of the disaster to realize the enormous size of the dust plume and how far it traveled geographically to settle on neighborhoods that ranged from Battery Park to Chinatown and Soho to multiple areas of Brooklyn and beyond.

This was no ordinary dust cloud. This was the dust of three pulverized office towers, (the Twin Towers, plus WTC 7), representing the most heavily computerized buildings in the world. WTC dust contained not only pulverized building materials such as concrete, gypsum and glass--which, in and of themselves are toxic to the human body--but an entire building's contents: computers, fluorescent fixtures, styrene furniture, nylon carpeting, miles of PVC-insulated telecommunications cables and much more--all blasted into a toxic chemical dust the likes of which has never been encountered in history. Contained in the dust were thousands of chemicals, including:

- 2,000,000 pounds of asbestos.
- 400,000 pounds of lead.
- The mercury from 500,000 shattered fluorescent fixtures: enough to poison a 625 square mile lake.
- Dioxin, including Agent Orange: Dangerous levels recorded for months as far as a mile away from the WTC site.
- PVCs--Polyvinyl chloride, exceedingly poisonous chemicals, including benzene: Sample readings by independent labs up to 180 times the safe level.

In addition, on September 11, 200,000 gallons of diesel fuel and transformer oil stored in tanks underneath the WTC site ruptured and caught fire, creating a giant underground inferno beneath the Pile on which the rescue workers toiled. These fires burned and smoldered until late into January 2002, releasing vast amounts of toxic chemicals and petroleum emissions. Emissions from the WTC fires were so strong that air pollution expert Thomas Cahill's UC-Davis monitoring station *one mile from Ground Zero* recorded emissions levels 15-20 times higher than any previously recorded in the

US. Cahill declared that the emissions from the WTC fires were greater than those of the Kuwait oil field fires after the Gulf War.

One has only to look up the toxic effects of these chemicals on the human body to realize that the exposed 9/11 population has been, quite simply, *poisoned*. Petroleum emissions are notorious carcinogens, as are all of the previously mentioned WTC toxins and the untold others that entered the bodies of the exposed. Further effects from the toxins include brain damage, organ failure, reproductive disorders, skin rashes, impaired hearing and vision, memory loss, diabetes, respiratory disease, auto-immune disease and a host of other life-threatening illnesses.

It is no wonder that, as of this 8th anniversary of September 11, the New York City Department of Health has recorded 817 deaths of WTC workers. Yet, we in the 9/11 Community feel this is vastly under-reported, as well as the 'official' numbers of the sick: 16,000 within the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment program, and 3,500 in the NYC-run WTC Environmental program, for a combined total of 20,000. Those numbers may seem high, but they do not reflect the additional vast numbers of people being treated within the private sector, nor do they reflect the numbers of the as yet-undiagnosed.

I happen to agree with David Worby, the class action lawyer who represents 10,000 sick responders--over 600 of whom have cancer--who declared ominously back in 2006 "*...there is going to be a cancer catastrophe the likes of which we've never seen in this country... the numbers are going to be staggering...*"

In spite of 270 confirmed cancer deaths within the responder population since 9/11, the Mt. Sinai WTC program has been loathe to pronounce the C-word: *cancer*. Yet, finally, 8 years after the crisis, a study came out this past August on the discovery of Multiple Myeloma--a rare blood cancer--within the responder population. *It is about time*. Yet, Mt. Sinai downplayed the connection, saying it is 'too early' to link WTC exposure to this cancer previously only seen in the elderly, which is now occurring in the responder population both in young individuals and at 16 times the national average rate.

We in the 9/11 Community would like to invite the medical directors of the WTC Program to visit the homes of the responders, to see the families torn apart by illness, the crushing burden of unpaid medical bills, the anxiety of spouses and children, the isolation of the victims as they witness the degradation of their body systems that succumb, one by one, to chemical poisoning as the medical community stands by saying it is 'too early' to make the connection with WTC toxins and a previously fit person whose entire health is now in ruins.

When I met David Miller in 2007, through the degradation of his illnesses, a flame of outrage burned bright. "9/11 is a giant Love Canal", Miller declared, "...the shame of this nation, America's dirty little secret... There are tens of thousands of people sick and dying, yet there is no recognition of this crisis on a national level...." Today, in 2009, the same holds largely true. Beyond a handful of members of the NY Congressional Delegation and Senate, this poisoning-by-chemicals of an entire demographic--of a population the size of Alaska-- has yet to be declared a public health issue, in spite of the fact that it was a blatant act of government malfeasance that brought the crisis on to begin with.

Perhaps this is why hundreds of elected officials, and two successive Presidents have chosen to look the other way. The impact of the 9/11 health crisis is staggering: both in the numbers, in the scope of the diseases issuing forth from the Chernobyl-like aftermath, and in the heartbreak of America's hero families as they go belly-up, begging for crumbs from the American medical establishment. Understandably, this is an image America's elected officials do not wish to broadcast to the world. Yet, the longer the administration waits, the worse the fallout from this crisis will be.

The time is NOW to address the 9/11 health crisis head on, to pass health legislation that will bring relief and aid to the tens of thousands of families who are suffering now, and to the hundreds of thousands that will surely fall victim in the future. It is America's moral obligation to make reparations to this community, and the festering shame of this nation as long as the crisis is not addressed.

Please join me in this fight for what is just and right, and support America's 9/11 Community. We owe it to the men and women and their families who have sacrificed so much, and who continue to sacrifice. Thank you.

Claire Calladine
9/11 Health Now
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