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News Release

U.S. Department of Labor

National News Release

September 14, 2001

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OSHA, EPA, Update Asbestos Data. Continue to reassure public of contamination fears

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration today announced that the majority of air and dust samples monitored in New York's financial district do not indicate levels of concern for asbestos. The new samples confirm previous reports that ambient air quality meets OSHA standards and consequently is not a case for public concern. New OSHA data also indicates that indoor air quality in downtown buildings will meet standards.

EPA has found variable asbestos levels in bulk debris and dust on the ground, but EPA continues to believe that there is no significant health risk to the general public in the coming days. Appropriate steps are being taken to clean up this dust and debris.

"Our tests show that it is safe for New Yorkers to go back to work in New York's Financial District" said John L. Henshaw, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA. "Keeping the streets clean and being careful not to track dust into buildings will help protect workers from remaining debris."

OSHA staff walked through New York's Financial District on September 13th wearing personal air monitors and collected data on potential asbestos exposure levels. All but two samples contained no asbestos. Two samples contained very low levels of unknown fiber, which is still being analyzed.

Air samples taken on September 13th inside buildings in New York's financial district were negative for asbestos. Debris samples collected outside buildings on cars and other surfaces contained small percentages of asbestos, ranging from 2.1 to 3.3 -- slightly above the 1 per cent trigger for defining asbestos material.

"EPA will be deploying sixteen vacuum trucks this weekend in an effort to remove as much of the dust and debris as possible from the site where the samples were obtained" said EPA Administrator, Christine Whitman. "In addition, we will be moving six continuous air monitoring stations into the area. We will put five near ground zero and one on Canal Street. The good news continues to be that the air samples have all been at levels that cause us no concern.

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Additional Contact Information

As businesses reopen in New York City, there may be concerns about workplace safety and health. Employers and employees are encouraged to contact city, state, and federal agencies if they have questions. Three professional organizations are also offering voluntary assistance related to the disaster.

For more information, call:

American Industrial Hygiene Association, (703) 849-8888
American Society of Safety Engineers, [www.asse.org] (847) 699-2929
National Safety Council, (800) 672-4692

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