

*Scientific Studies:****World Trade Center Lesson***

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September 11th is a day that will never be forgotten for various reasons. While most of us remember the day as shocking and emotional, those involved in rescue at the World Trade Center’s twin tower’s, remember the toxic cloud of air pollution, dust, and smoke with every breath. According to scientists, occupational exposures at the World Trade Center disaster site have been associated with a disease profile in which ongoing respiratory symptoms predominate.

Five conditions prevail in a sampling of 554 workers. Seventy-nine percent developed upper airway disease, 58% presented with gastroesophageal reflux disease, 49% suffered lower airway disease, 42% developed a psychological disorder, and 18% were affected by chronic musculoskeletal illness. A combination of upper airway disease, gastroesophageal reflux disease, and lower airway disease is the most frequent pattern of emergence, with 30% of workers suffering all three conditions.

A strong association towards lower airway and gastroesophageal reflux disease was found in workers who arrived within the first 48 hours of the terrorist attack. Prior use of cigarettes increased the risk factor.

Analysis of the toxic cloud of dust found vermiculite, plaster, paint, foam, glass, cement, asbestos, soot, charred wood, chrysotile, phthalates, PCB’s, dioxins, furans, jet fuel, and more.

Has anyone stopped to think about where these materials came from? They did not get dumped into the air by the air craft. The materials present in this cloud are present in our environment and entered the dust from the destruction of the towers and airplanes. They are obviously harmful to breath when a dust is created. One has to wonder how safe they are to begin with. Many of these items are volatile organic compounds and slowly release gasses into the air over time. Could this be the cause of rising asthma rates?

Mounting evidence is showing our environment does affect our health. There are alternatives to these toxic materials we use. Perhaps a concerted effort should be made to reduce the use of toxicants? After all, anyone could have been at the World Trade Center that fateful day.

-LS

Reference

De la Hoz RE, Shohet MR, Chasan R, Bienenfeld LA, Afilaka AA. Occupational toxicant inhalation injury: the World Trade Center (WTC) experience. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health*. 2007 Sep 5.

