Dragon, Karen E. (CDC/NIOSH/EID)

From: jenmac65@optonline.net
Sent: Thursday, February 09, 2012 6:39 AM
To: NIOSH Docket Office (CDC)
Subject: NIOSH Docket #248

Dear Committee Members:

I am the widow of FDNY Firefighter and 9/11 first responder John F. McNamara, who died of cancer. I write today to urge you to add cancer to the list of covered illnesses in the Zadroga Bill.

In June 2006, my otherwise healthy husband was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer. He died on August 9, 2009, when he was just 44 years old. He left behind me and our son Jack who is now five years old. Without reservation, I believe John's cancer was a result of the over 500 hours he spent in the pit at Ground Zero in the aftermath of 9/11. John did not smoke, he drank only socially, and engaged in no other behavior that would put him at risk for cancer. He exercised regularly and ate right. During his cancer treatment at the world renowned Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, genetic tests revealed no genetic marker for colon cancer.

During the course of John's illness we incurred hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of medical costs. He endured numerous major surgeries and chemotherapy every other week. His cancer was so aggressive that even skipping one treatment meant the tumors grew. By the end, there was no treatment that could keep the tumors from growing and they were all over his body. I saw the scans and how his lungs were filled with cancer. Given all we endured, however, we were lucky - we had health insurance that paid for treatment. That treatment allowed John to see the birth of his son and to watch him grow to 2 1/2. The treatment allowed us to have a few extra years together before he died. However, there are many out there not so lucky as us; they do not have medical insurance and cannot afford treatment. Simply put, they are given a death sentence when they are diagnosed. Adding cancer to the Zadroga Bill will give them a fighting chance and it is my firm belief that we owe at least this much to our 9/11 first responders.

For those who are left behind, the Bill will also provide much needed compensation to those widows and children left behind. I do not consider myself to be much different than my widow friends of 9/11. My husband responded like theirs did, he did a hero's job without question when asked, and he died as a result. Yet, somehow, it is believed by some that I, and other like me are not worthy of compensation which would help me to raise my son. Make no mistake - no amount of compensation could ever take the place of what I have lost, nothing could ever give my son his dad back. However, it would be some comfort to me to know that John's sacrifice was recognized as a worthy one and not brushed under the rug. Moreover, there are many families out there who are financially devastated and have depleted their savings on treatment. Let me assure you that it is hard enough to pick up the pieces after losing a husband, it is worse when you have no resources to even pay for a funeral.

I will leave the statistics and number to others, but I urge you to look at the studies that have recently been published about cancer rates. I urge you to look at the numbers of first responders who have cancer or who have died of cancer. These numbers are not just a coincidence. There is no doubt in my mind the my husband's and so many others cancers were caused by their time spent at Ground Zero. I have to believe that as men and women of reason you know it too.

Please do the right thing; for me and for the hundreds of other families who struggle to make a life without their loved one. Look at your own spouses and children and think what they would do if faced with what sick 9/11

responders have been forced to deal with. Do what should have been done over a year ago when this bill first passed. Add cancer to the Bill.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer K. McNamara
13 Homan Avenue
Blue Point, NY 11715
631-291-3460
jenmac65@optonline.net