



## Protecting Workers at the World Trade Center Site Response from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is the federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related disease and injury. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### Fact Sheet

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 exposed rescue and recovery workers to unprecedented levels of risk for job-related injury, illness, and death. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a part of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), responded swiftly to address workers' needs in the aftermath of the attacks.

NIOSH quickly sent to Ground Zero dozens of staff who applied their technical expertise to help meet immediate worker protection needs. Also, by helping workers and supervisors build their own safety and health capacity, NIOSH was able to enhance safety at the sprawling site. In the aftermath, NIOSH is working with its partners to address concerns about potential long-term effects on workers' health and to help protect workers in the event of future emergencies. A summary of NIOSH's assistance follows.

#### NIOSH Responded to Workers' Immediate Needs:

- Assessed individual jobs and work locations to identify potential hazards, including risk of eye injuries from blowing debris and potential exposures to silica dust, asbestos, and other hazardous materials.
- Helped site managers select appropriate equipment for sampling, use it properly, and institute procedures for analyzing samples quickly.

- Helped managers and workers select appropriate personal protective equipment and coordinated the deployment of respirators to rescue and recovery workers.
- Developed cost-effective procedures for cleaning and sanitizing respirators on-site.
- Worked with medical assistance teams to ensure they were prepared to meet specific emergencies on-site and to help them develop procedures for follow-up evaluations of worker injuries.

#### NIOSH Helped Build Safety and Health Capacity:

- Developed and disseminated written guidelines to help supervisors integrate worker safety and health into site operations.
- Distributed written documents with information that workers and supervisors were most likely to need on-site to address specific concerns, including:

*• Fact Sheet for Workers in Secondary Response and Other Supporting Roles: Frequently Asked Questions About Exposure to Dusts and Gases*

[www.cdc.gov/niosh/erfaqs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/erfaqs.html)





• *Eye Safety: Emergency Response and Disaster Recovery*  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/eyesafe.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/eyesafe.html)

• *Traumatic Incident Stress: Information for Emergency Response Workers*  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/unp-trinstrs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/unp-trinstrs.html)

- Provided electronic access on the NIOSH Web page to critically needed health and safety information, which is an ongoing resource for workers, supervisors, and others in the event of future emergencies.

### **NIOSH Is Following Up on Long-Term Needs:**

- Conducting health hazard evaluations to assess potential health effects from workers' exposure to dust in buildings near the recovery site.
- Providing technical assistance to the New York City Department of Health regarding the development of a voluntary registry of individuals who worked at, lived near, or responded to the World Trade Center attack.
- Working with local partners to develop a medical screening and monitoring program for workers involved in rescue and recovery operations at Ground Zero.

### **NIOSH Is Helping Strengthen Preparedness:**

- Issued new interim rules in December 2001 for approving self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for use by fire fighters and other first

responders at scenes of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats.

- Convened a national workshop in December 2001 to gather information and recommendations on the performance, availability, and appropriateness of personal protective equipment. A report from the workshop is available at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl).
- Developing recommendations for management processes and worker training to prevent injury and illness to first responders and recovery workers at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Assessing research to develop and evaluate technologies for better protecting emergency responders and other workers in terrorist attacks.
- Developing guidelines for emergency responders on the selection, use, and maintenance of respirators and other personal protective equipment in disaster situations.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 highlighted the importance of worker safety and health as an essential component of public health. NIOSH's efforts with partners from industry, labor, government, and public health will help integrate occupational safety and health into ongoing planning for emergency preparedness and homeland security at the local, state, and national levels.

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**For additional information, contact**

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