

NY Reps. Ask for Autopsy Guidelines to Better Track 9/11-Related Deaths

Thursday, 11 November 2010

New York, NY - U.S. Reps. Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler, and Peter King, authors of H.R. 847, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, wrote to federal 9/11 Health Coordinator Dr. John Howard this week and urged him to develop autopsy guidelines that would help doctors better understand the effects of 9/11-related illnesses and track deaths that may have been caused by exposures to toxins released by the collapse of the World Trade Center towers. The federal government began work to develop such guidelines several years ago, but the guidelines were never completed. A full copy of the lawmakers' letter to Dr. Howard can be found below.

"More than 900 people who served at Ground Zero have reportedly passed away, but we don't know exactly how many of these heroes may have died as a result of 9/11 toxic exposures. Establishing autopsy guidelines would allow us to better know the effects of Ground Zero toxins - and provide more effective treatment for those who are sick. Dr. Howard has been a steadfast advocate for 9/11 responders and survivors, and we hope he will begin work to establish these guidelines as soon as possible," said Rep. Maloney.

"Updating autopsy guidelines is a simple step for NIOSH to take to improve its data on the deadly effects of World Trade Center-related illnesses and conditions," said Rep. Nadler. "Generating more accurate data would go a great distance toward enhancing the treatment and understanding of those living with post-9/11 conditions."

November 9, 2010

John Howard, MD

Director

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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Patriots Plaza Building

Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Howard:

We write to urge NIOSH to develop autopsy guidelines that would help to better understand the causes of the illnesses being experienced by World Trade Center (WTC) responders and survivors. We know that NIOSH attempted to develop such guidelines several years ago, but those guidelines were never completed.

With the passing of time since September 11, 2001, many of the responders who worked at the site and other survivors are dying. For some of the deceased responders and survivors, we know that their deaths were caused by WTC-related illnesses such as respiratory diseases. However, for many of the responders and survivors who have passed away, we do not know to what extent WTC exposures contributed to their deaths, or whether their deaths were unrelated to their exposures at Ground Zero.

Setting guidelines for autopsies for those who were exposed to toxins at Ground Zero could help to better understand the effects of 9/11 exposures both for that individual and for the larger affected group. For example, mild or moderate pulmonary fibrosis due to WTC exposures might not have been detected or recognized in a WTC responder who had not undergone a recent monitoring exam, but fibrosis would be found on an autopsy designed to ascertain that type of medical problem. We believe that standard autopsy guidelines issued by NIOSH could be made available to the medical community and would help family members of responders and survivors as well as the medical and scientific community wanting to better understand what effect WTC exposures had on responders and survivors who had just died.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued commitment to the 9/11 responders and survivors.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY

JERROLD NADLER

PETER T. KING

Members of Congress

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