



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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One Month Left

World Trade Center Workers and Volunteers Face Deadline to Protect Themselves in Case of Future Illness

Anyone who worked or volunteered in 9/11 rescue, recovery and cleanup efforts has one month – or 25 business days - to register for future workers' compensation benefits in case of future illness tied to that work.

The state set a deadline of Sept. 11, 2010, for World Trade Center workers and volunteers to register to preserve their eligibility for workers' compensation. Because that date falls on a Saturday, people will be allowed to register on Monday, Sept. 13, the state Workers Compensation Board announced last week.

The workers' compensation deadline is particularly important in light of the U.S. House of Representatives' recent defeat of a bill covering medical costs and lost wages for workers who become ill from their work at the World Trade Center site, said Joel Shufro, executive director of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH).

“While we hope that bill will be re-introduced and passed quickly, its defeat makes it more important that 9/11 workers and volunteers register for workers' compensation,” Shufro said. “Only by registering now will they be eligible for compensation and medical treatment if they become ill down the road from their exposures at the World Trade Center.”

It is estimated that up to 100,000 workers and volunteers who performed 9/11 rescue, recovery or cleanup work are eligible to sign up with the state Workers' Compensation Board. So far, 35,980 have done so.

More than 20,000 have developed serious health problems from exposure to toxic dust or fumes at the site or mental disorders caused by psychological trauma associated with their work. The most common illnesses linked to World Trade Center exposures include diseases of the upper respiratory system.

Symptoms can take years to show. Even now, nearly nine years after the attacks, approximately 200 workers and volunteers enroll each month in World Trade Center monitoring and treatment

programs, reporting the onset of symptoms. Altogether, about 45,000 have enrolled in such monitoring programs.

Any eligible person who registers by the Sept. 13th deadline will have the right to file a 9/11-related workers' compensation at any time in the future, no matter when 9/11-related symptoms began to occur. If a worker is or becomes ill and the claim is established, workers' compensation will fully cover the cost of treatment, including prescriptions and hospitalization.

Those eligible to register include most people who performed any rescue, recovery or cleanup work, no matter how briefly, paid or unpaid, in lower Manhattan south of Canal or Pike Streets between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 12, 2002. It also includes those who worked at the Staten Island landfill, the barge operation between Manhattan and Staten Island or the New York City morgue (or any of the temporary morgues set up during that period).

There is no residency or citizenship requirement to register for 9/11-related compensation. If workers or volunteers meet other eligibility criteria, it does not matter whether they live in New York State. Their immigration status—whether documented or not—also does not affect their eligibility.

For more about eligibility requirements and the registration procedure, workers and volunteers may go to the NYCOSH website at www.nycosh.org, or call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline, 1-866-WTC-2556. State guidelines and forms are here: <http://www.wcb.state.ny.us/content/main/forms/WTC-12.pdf>

The New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) is a non-profit education and advocacy organization, dedicated to ensuring that every worker has a safe and healthy workplace.

NYCOSH works in partnership with the United Church of Christ to provide assistance to all workers, volunteers and community residents who were adversely affected by toxic contamination resulting from the attack on the World Trade Center.