



Report Finds WTC Responders More Likely to Suffer Mental Health Problems

A May 2008 report released by the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program showed that 9/11 rescue, recovery and clean-up workers were much more likely to suffer Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), panic disorder, increased drinking, and other mental health problems than the general population. The study also found that many WTC responders had more than one condition, and that this was connected with disruptions in their personal relationships, work, and social life. Those who had PTSD also were more likely to report behavioral problems in their children.

What specifically did the study find?

- The percentage of responders who reported signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was the same as the rate among Afghanistan war veterans, and about three to four times higher than the population in general
- Responders showed signs of panic disorder at more than twice the rate of the general population
- Responders showed signs of major depression at about the same rate as in the general population
- Having any mental health condition made it about twice as likely for a 9/11 responder to have problems with alcohol
- Having any mental health condition made it about 17 times as likely for a 9/11 responder to have problems at home, at work, or in relationships
- Having more than one mental health condition increased that risk by nearly 40 times, and perhaps as high as 86 times if a responder had PTSD, panic disorder, and major depression

Who was in the study?

The report was based on mental health questionnaires filled out by 10,132 WTC rescue, recovery, and clean-up workers and volunteers in the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program between July 2002 and October 2006. They provided their answers before receiving mental health services from the program, and prior to receiving any diagnoses from mental health providers.

How to get help

As the report makes clear, many responders suffer emotional effects due to the WTC disaster. The WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program tries to improve the emotional health of 9/11 responders, in addition to treating their medical problems. The program reminds responders that taking care of their emotional health is as important as treating their physical health.

Where to find the full report

The full report is called "Enduring Mental Health Morbidity and Social Function Impairment in WTC Rescue, Recovery, and Cleanup Workers: The Psychological Dimension of an Environmental Health Disaster." It was published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* in September 2008. The report can be found online at <http://www.ehponline.org/docs/2008/11164/abstract.html> or at www.wtcexams.org.

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