



# **9/11**

# **World Trade Center**

# **Disaster**

## **25 years later**

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**PEF 2026 H&S CONFERENCE**

***PRESENTED BY:***

**GERALDINE STELLA, FORMER PEF H&S DIRECTOR**

**ROBERT GREY, GREY & GREY, PLLC**

# World Trade Center Tragedy

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On 9-11-2001

- Over **300 PEF members** worked in the World Trade Center (WTC).
- PEF had members in both towers, **and lost 34 members** that day.
  - Many from Tax and Finance
- Many more suffered long term health effects.



# PEF lost 34 members on 911



Ignatius Adanga  
 Jeremiah Ahern  
 Japhet Aryee  
 Steven Berger  
 Eli Chalouh  
 James Domanico  
 Sareve Dukat  
 Clyde Frazier Jr.  
 Dianne Gladstone  
 Yan Z (Cindy) Guan  
 Neil Lie  
 Chow Lam  
 Myoung Lee  
 Paul Lee  
 Stephen Lefkowitz  
 Charles Lesperance  
 Tyrone May  
 Robert Miller  
 Richard Miuccio  
 Oscar Nesbitt  
 Michael Ou  
 Salvatore Papasso  
 Diane Parsons  
 Dennis Pierce  
 Gerard Rauzi  
 Rose Riso  
 Jon Schlissel  
 See Wong Shum  
 Barry Simowitz  
 Yesh Tembe  
 Diane Urban  
 Sankara Velamuri  
 Yuk Ping Wong

# PEF Responders and Volunteers

On 9/11 and during the months following the terrorist attack, **more than 500 PEF members** joined thousands of other union workers to get New York City up and running.

Responders and volunteers:

- Rescue
- Recovery
- Debris Removal
- Restoration of Vital Support Services
- Inspections
- Food safety



# WTC Health Hazards

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Collapse of towers and other buildings nearby pulverized concrete and other construction materials

Much of the asbestos was fragmented into short structures – making it friable.

Fires burned for months – spewing toxic fumes.





# WTC Exposures

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Responders, volunteers, residents, and workers in the area had inadequate or no respiratory protection, and were exposed to debris, toxic substances and other hazards:

- Smoke
- Dust
- Pulverized cement, gypsum, glass
- Combustion gases
- Acid mists
- Heavy metals
- Asbestos
- Silica
- Volatile organic compounds
- Exposure to widespread human trauma
  - Witnesses to acute injury and death - Before and during buildings collapse









# WTC Health Effects

## Physical injuries

- Musculoskeletal/strain injuries
- Acute irritant effects
- Upper airway inflammation
  - Bronchitis
  - Reactive airway disease (RADs)/Asthma
- Long term health effects
  - Pulmonary Airway Disease
  - Various Cancers
  - Temporary or permanent disabilities



# WTC Health Effects

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## Psychological effects

- Fear of personal harm
  - During building fires, collapse, and while on “pile”
- Witnesses to aftermath
  - Many rescue and recovery workers lost family and friends in collapse
  - Few survivors rescued
  - Many had contact with human remains
- Persistent depression and anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder



**“If there’s another attack, just get the hell out of the building...we’ll deal with the consequences later”**

*Roger Benson, PEF President*

# **PEF President Benson Took Action**

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**Benson had personal contact with the 9/11 families and directed leaders and staff to do the same.**

**Benson immediately met with New York State to address the Union's safety concerns, and to improve emergency preparedness, response, and evacuation procedures.**

**Benson also made specific recommendations on the need for communications procedures around anthrax mail incidents.**

**Benson directed PEF's Statewide and Agency leaders to get emergency L/M and H&S meetings to develop or improve emergency response and evacuation procedures.**

**Benson also directed the Health & Safety Department to train Article 18 H&S Committee, and agency H&S and L/M Chairs on emergency response and action planning.**

**Benson and USW 9265 President Geraldine Thornton signed an MOU for PEF staff to make donations of cash or a vacation day a PEF WTC Relief Fund to raise funds for PEF members injured and the families of the members lost in the WTC tragedy. PEF raised nearly \$100,000.**

# PEF Health & Safety Dept. Actions

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Director Jonathan Rosen, NYC H&S Specialist Shawn Bobb, H.Q. H&S Specialist Geraldine Thornton (Stella), and Article 18 Chair Ross Aaronson:

1. Advised and assisted **PEF President Roger Benson**, leaders, and staff on all aspects of H&S impacts of the tragedy.
2. Immediately provided support to members, leaders, and staff who were involved in the tragedy, deployed to the scene, or worked in the area.
3. Worked with NYS agencies to provide reasonable accommodations, safety measures, worksite testing, EAP, counseling, and stress debriefing sessions for workers.
4. Developed a Q&A for the PEF website, and a WTC resource booklet for survivors, families, and leaders, on hazards, rights, and workers comp benefits.
5. Made direct contact and mailed resource materials to the 500 PEF member responders who deployed to NYC.



# PEF Health & Safety Dept. Actions

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6. Conducted inspections and air sampling of workplaces in and around the Ground Zero.
7. After each inspection “town hall meetings” were convened and agency staff had the opportunity to hear an initial summary of the inspection, get an explanation of how the building’s ventilation system works, and have questions answered.
8. Reviewed, interpreted, and summarized analysis and testing reports from NYS or their consultants.
9. Joined a coalition with Mt. Sinai, other unions, medical, psychiatric, and workers’ compensation experts to provide support to workers.
10. Developed and delivered training programs and presentations on emergency response and biological hazards.





# Lessons Learned

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- 9/11 changed everything about emergency response.
- 1993 WTC bombing led to better procedures and more workers getting out of the Towers in less time.
- BUT – High Rise Evacuation and Shelter In Place procedures were still used on 9/11.
- Stronger respiratory protection practices were needed for responders and service providers.
- Better psychological support and medical monitoring are critical for post-incident response.
- Multi stakeholder teams (labor/management, public health, government reps, and NYS Agencies) should be convened for strategic planning (preventative and post-incident).



**Thank You!**

