



Research: Lung Function Continues to Decline 13 Years After 9/11 Terrorist Attacks

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Researchers found that lung function declines among firefighters who responded to the 9/11 attacks 13 years after the attacks took place. The largest decreases in lung function were among smokers and those who had the greatest exposure to toxic dust.

Parker Waichman LLP, a national law firm that has spent many years fighting to ensure that the first responders and survivors of the 9/11 terrorist attacks are never forgotten, comments that responders continue to suffer health problems due to the toxic dust exposure to which they were subject during and following the attacks. A study published in CHEST found that World Trade Center (WTC)-exposed firefighters suffer from reduced lung function. The greatest decline in lung function was found to be among smokers and those who had the greatest exposure to the toxic dust cloud. "We showed in this latest follow-up that smoking worsened lung function in this group of World Trade Center responders, which is not really a surprise," said study author Thomas Aldrich, MD, of Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City, according to Medscape. "But we also showed that stopping smoking makes a major difference, and the earlier the better in terms of lung function."

According to Medscape, this is the longest study of pulmonary function in rescue workers involved in a major environmental disaster. The analysis included 10,641 New York City firefighters. These individuals underwent a baseline measure for forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV1) a test of lung function before 9/11. After 9/11, additional FEV1 measurements were taken. During previous follow-ups of one and seven years after exposure, FEV1 decreased an average of 10 percent among those who were WTC-exposed. More than 10 percent of the cohort developed new obstructive airway diseases.

"There was little recovery over the first six years," the authors stated, according to Medscape. "Follow-up into the next decade allowed us to determine the longer-term exposure effects and the roles of cigarette-smoking and cessation on lung function trajectories."

Approximately 15 percent of the cohort responded to 9/11, and 65 percent were never smokers. The findings revealed that lung function continues to be worse among firefighters who arrived the morning of the attacks compared to those who responded several days later. Smoking was a significant factor in pulmonary function, with smokers more likely to have an FEV1 less than the lower limit of normal (LLN) compared to never-smokers or those who quit before 9/11 or those who quit between 9/11 and March 10, 2008.

"Particularly for firefighters and others in physically demanding occupations, falling below the lower limit of normal FEV1, and especially falling into the moderately severe impairment range (<70% predicted), can lead to serious lifestyle and employability changes," the authors wrote. "For that reason, our findings that 20% of current smokers or those quitting after 2008 had abnormal lung function, and that the prevalence of abnormal lung function continued to rise throughout the study, help to demonstrate the magnitude of harm from smoking in this cohort."

Parker Waichman comments that exposure to the toxic conditions during and after 9/11 is associated with many health conditions, including respiratory illnesses and many different types of cancer. "The findings of this study show the extent of the toxic dust exposure in 9/11 responders," said Matthew J. McCauley, Senior Litigation Counsel at Parker Waichman. "Even though it has been over a decade since the attacks, numerous firefighters and other responders continue to suffer from declining lung function."

The firm emphasizes the importance of the Zadroga Act, which provides medical benefits and compensation to sick and injured 9/11 responders through the WTC Health Program and the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). The Act was first passed in 2010. After years of effort, the Act was reauthorized. The reauthorization, which was signed into law on December 18, 2015, funds the WTC Health Program for another 75 years and extends the VCF for another five years.

Parker Waichman actively worked toward the 2010 passage of the Zadroga Act, as well its recent reauthorization in 2015. In doing so, the firm committed its resources to many projects, including taking part in

numerous lobbying efforts and rallies, and being part of delegations in trips to the nation's capital, often along with the firm's clients?other responders and survivors. In addition, Parker Waichman also committed its resources to assist with the research on, and creation of, the ?Take Action? toll that enabled citizens to review Congress members? activities concerning the Act.

The firm continues to stand alongside Ground Zero first responders, survivors, and advocates and vows to continue its efforts to safeguard these heroes and ensure that all of the deserved Zadroga Act compensation is received. To determine eligibility for compensation under the Act, or for assistance with a claim, please visit Parker Waichman's website or call 1-800-LAW-INFO (1-800-529-4636).

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