

Governor Cuomo Announces Significant new Protections for World Trade Center Workers

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced World Trade Center workers who performed rescue, recovery and clean-up in the year after 9/11 now have significant new protections for workers compensation benefits. The World Trade Center Registry was reopened and the deadline for joining extended to September 11, 2014; certain previously time-barred World Trade Center claims are being reopened and considered timely; and qualifying health conditions were added to the law.

New York State is committed to caring for those who stood up in the face of danger to assist in the rescue and recovery efforts during and after the horrific attacks at the World Trade Center, Governor Cuomo said. That is why we are providing new protections for the workers, including first responders, clean-up crews and volunteers, who answered the call for help and ensuring they have access to workers compensation benefits for the future. I urge those who worked at Ground Zero and other recovery sites to file a WTC-12 form today to apply for the benefits they deserve.

Filing a WTC-12 form with the Workers Compensation Board preserves the workers compensation rights for those who performed rescue, recovery and clean-up after the World Trade Center attacks. The State again urges those who worked at Ground Zero, the Fresh Kills Landfill, on the barges, the piers and the morgues to file a WTC-12 form, no matter if they were injured or not and whether they were employed or volunteered.

The last national Tell Us You Were There campaign ended with 41,094 filings received by the previous Sept. 13, 2010, deadline. As part of a new law signed by Governor Cuomo, any WTC-12 filings received after that date are now consider timely.

The Board will also review its files to locate any World Trade Center claims previously disallowed as untimely under Workers Compensation Law Secs. 18 and/or 28 or from failure to file a timely WTC-12 form. The Board will, under its own initiative, now reconsider those particular World Trade Center claims timely.

A detailed list of qualifying health conditions resulting from hazardous exposure for World Trade Center workers who participated in rescue, recovery and clean-up operations was also added. The categories are diseases of the

- Upper respiratory tract and mucosae;
- Lower respiratory tract;
- Gastroesophageal tract;
- Psychological axis; and

- New onset diseases that develop in the future resulting from exposure.

When New Yorkers needed their help, 9/11 rescue, recovery, and cleanup workers selflessly answered the call, President of the New York State AFL-CIO Mario Cilento said. It's incumbent upon us, as a state, to be there for them now and in the future as we continue to learn more about the growing impact of their exposure. We commend Governor Cuomo and the Legislature for ensuring that critical treatment and benefits will be available for the heroes who served in the aftermath of 9/11.

The enactment of this legislation is a major victory for those who worked in rescue, recovery and cleanup operations following the attack on the World Trade Center, Executive Director Joel Shufro of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health said. By extending the deadline to register to file a claim for another year and reinstating those whose registrations were previously time barred, many workers who develop WTC related illnesses with long latency periods will be eligible to file for benefits under New York States Workers Compensation Law. The enactment of this legislation is an act of justice and equity and the legislature should be congratulated for passing the legislation and the governor for signing it.

As an injured worker as of the result of working at Ground Zero, I know firsthand what this important piece of legislation means to those who are sick or injured from their heroic actions. This will bill not only provides those sick or injured the opportunity to apply for benefits, but more importantly it gives them hope that our Governor still cares about yesterday's heroes, John Feal, founder of the FealGood Foundation, said.

Governor Cuomo is committed to ensuring all World Trade Center workers receive the benefits and protections they are accorded under the law. To achieve this, at his direction the Board has:

- Contacted previously untimely filers;
- Translated the WTC-12 form into seven languages other than English;
- Reopened a dedicated phone line for World Trade Center workers, 1 855 WTC-2014 (1 855 982-2014);
- Relunched the web page www.wcb.ny.gov/WTC12 for World Trade Center workers; and
- Planned outreach to workers and groups representing World Trade Center workers.

All these worker protections were added to Workers Compensation Law Article 8-A.

The Boards dedicated World Trade Center work groups and hearing parts have functioned continuously since September 2001.