

March 31, 2004

WTC AQ Tech. Expt. Panel (Testimony); Museum of the Native American, Auditorium

My name is Harriet Grimm. I am a resident of 310 Greenwich Street, Independence Plaza North, just six blocks north of the WTC site, where I live with my domestic partner and our young child. I am a survivor of WTC #5; my partner and our then 3-½ year old escaped from our daughter's preschool at Trinity Church in the cloud of the collapsing north tower.

On 9/11 our building was unquestionably enshrouded in dust. For four months we lived with the background of smoke from burning plastics and other office materials. For eight months we overlooked the 24/7-barge debris transfer. No question, our living environment had been contaminated not only on 9/11; but also for months after. We did everything a family can reasonably do on our own. We followed the EPA recommendations for wet wiping the interior. I removed all "visible dust", dust that I could write my name on. We wore masks; we installed HEPA filters in every room, and lived with our windows sealed. We discarded and replaced rugs, upholstery, blinds, towels, and other difficult to clean items. We waited 16 ½ months to have the contaminated carpeting removed from the public hallway outside our apartment door. We waited 19 months for our apartment to be cleaned by EPA subcontractors.

My testimony here today is to underscore the inadequacy of the post 9/11 clean up on residential spaces in lower Manhattan. If my experience is representative, we have a very serious problem. I was very diligent.

Our common areas and hallway carpets were heavily contaminated with dust, both from the event 9/11 but also from the daily tracking of dust from the neighborhood into the building. We requested care be given the removal of hallway carpeting as we knew it to be contaminated with asbestos. We met with representatives of EPA and their cleanup contractors and were assured that a specific protocol of notification, alternative housing, and contained removal of carpeting would be followed.

On January 20th, Martin Luther King's birthday, observed (a school holiday) the EPA began removal of the contaminated carpeting in the hallway. Although Arlene Andersen had promised advanced notification, there was none. I quickly learned that it was Trio, the "removals sub-contractor" under the supervision of ATC who was performing the work. It was a holiday; union rules would dictate that this work should be paid as triple time.

While they were wet vacuuming the carpet, I asked that they stop the removal process to allow my 5 year old and my domestic partner who has a pulmonary condition the opportunity to leave the premises. The work continued; our request unheeded. The work supervisors were rude if not hostile.

We called the lobby. Our security persons did not have any contact information for the EPA or the contractors. I later learned that our Building Manager Deborah Dolan also had not been informed that the contractor was working in the building on that day. I called the EPA hotline number at 877-796-5471 and asked to speak to Arlene Andersen. I was connected with Ben Barry's voice mail. He returned my call three days later with a very clear apology for the failure to notify tenants as per the "standard operating procedure."

Meanwhile, I attempted to reach Mr. Marrone and was switched to Mr. Fred Burkhart. I explained that ATC/Trio was removing carpet on my floor and that we had not been given any notice of the carpet removal work resuming today, or this week. Note that the only notice posted in the lobby at this time was last week's notice referring to the removal of carpet from 38, 37, 36, 35, and 34.

I told him that I was very angry that we had not received notice, that personnel in the hallway were continuing the removal in spite of our request that they give us opportunity to tape our door and leave our

apartment. I had been prepared to, upon notice, speak to all of my hallway neighbors and offer them the use of the tape I purchased for that use. No notice, no opportunity.

I handed the telephone to John Scaracella who came to my door and identified himself as the ATC supervisor on site. He spoke to Mr. Burkhart. Following their conversation, the operation in the hallway stopped for approximately 5 minutes while I taped my door closed and left. My neighbor in 33H expressed his concern that he, his wife, and infant grandson were home. They later taped themselves into the apartment.

I was very concerned to see that workers were dressed in street clothes. Mr. Scaracella and several other workers wore no dust masks or respirators. Several of the women who were dusting/wiping wore simple white dust masks. I overheard one of the supervisors say to one of the female workers “don’t go crazy” which I understood to mean, don’t work too hard on the dusting.

By 2pm I learned that the removal process had ended at the 33rd floor especially since I overheard one of the workers complaining that they might not have adequate amounts of brown paper to cover the floors after carpet removal. I was also glad to see that the dates and floors for future carpet removal were now posted in the lobby.

They were **not** taking the clean up seriously. They were not treating the contaminants appropriately. Failure to wear respirators and dust masks was explained to me that they did not want to frighten the public. Clearly, it was their job to inform and educate the public.

When some of the same workers came to my apartment two months later to clean inside my apartment, they still did not have protective clothing. I personally provided a mask to the woman who was sent out onto my terrace to dispose of pots of contaminated soil.

The “air is safe”, the clean up is “adequate”, respirators are “not required”; the testing is “scientific”.. these are all lies which point to a top to bottom arrogance and callous disregard for the health and safety of downtown residents and cleanup workers.

The events of 9/11 were tragic;

The voluntary, haphazard, piecemeal cleanup that followed is shameful.

Additional comment:

In closing, I wish to add that this afternoon I listened in disbelief to a discussion of how to test for re-contamination of spaces; when basic, comprehensive, statistically significant testing of the whole impacted area has never been completed in the first place. We waited a long time to have our common areas cleaned; we waited a long time to have our apartments cleaned. You should not wait until you conclude your report to begin comprehensive testing. What does it matter whether a space is contaminated or re-contaminated? We all deserve to live, work, and play in a clean environment.

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