



Menlo Park Fire Protection District

300 Middlefield Road • Menlo Park, CA 94025 • Tel: 650.688.8400 • Fax: 650.323.9129 Website:
www.menlofire.org • Email: mpfd@menlofire.org

Fire Chief
Harold Schapelhouman

Board of Directors
Ollie Brown Peter
Carpenter Rex
Ianson John
Osmer
Bart Spencer

Edolphus Towns, Chairman
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6143

January 19, 2008

Honorable Towns

I want to start by thanking you, Chairman Towns, Congress Women Maloney and all the members from the House of Representatives who are supporting the issues of Medical Screening and Workers Compensation for rescue workers.

My name is Frank Fraone and I am a twenty-seven year veteran of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District. Currently I hold the position of Division Chief in charge of Operations. I am also the Program Manager for the Home Land Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Urban Search & Rescue Team California Task Force Three (CA-TF3) based out of Menlo Park California. I have been a member of CA-TF3 since it's inception in 1991. As a member of CA-TF3 and FEMA US&R Incident Support Team (IST) I have been deployed to many federal and state disasters including: Northridge Earthquake 1994, Oklahoma City Bombing 1995, California Floods 1998 and the World Trade Center 2001. I also deployed to Hurricane Georges 1998, Hurricane Charlie 2004, Hurricane Francis, 2004, Hurricane Ivan 2004, Hurricane Dennis 2005, Hurricane Katrina 2005 and the Greensburg Tornado in 2007. Each event in itself was significant to those who were affected and to the rescue workers who responded. For me, one event stands out over all because the impact it had to my fellow firefighters and the lasting medical concerns that affected me.

On September 11, 2001 I was already deployed on a large scale wildland fire in Calaveras County California. I returned home on September 14th. On September 16th 2001 I was deployed to the World Trade Center as a member of the FEMA US&R IST as a Branch Chief. Prior to deployment I received a medical exam. At that time I did not have any medical ailments, injuries or sickness. I spent the next twelve days, sixteen hours a day on the rubble pile at the World Trade Center. I was assigned night time operations between buildings 4 & 5 in the West Sector. I was charged with coordinating the efforts of FEMA Rescue Teams, International Rescue Teams, State Rescue Teams, Iron Workers and liaison with the Port Authority and FDNY. I spent the majority of my time on the pile or between buildings 4 & 5 at my command post. At about day ten, I started loosing my voice, coughing and experiencing prolonged headaches.

After returning home, I was experiencing chronic coughing and shortness of breath. I was examined by three different physicians over a six month time period and was placed on a variety of medications and breathing treatments. Eventually, Joseph Zammuto M.D. diagnosed me with a lower respiratory airway disease. I continued the chronic coughing for nine straight months before it subsided.

The shortness of breath and coughing are exacerbated when exposed to smoke, dust or strenuous activity. I currently have two different types of inhalers that I use when these episode occur.

Of the sixty-seven members who responded from CA-TF3, Seventy percent experienced illnesses including; shortness of breath, chronic coughing, pneumonia, nose bleeds and long lasting severe colds. A few months after returning, our then Program Manger Chief Schapelhouman heard about the Mount Sinai medical monitoring program. It took Chief Schapelhouman over a year before he could convince the program coordinators to accept us and allow a local physician to perform the evaluations. Originally the only facility we could use was in Napa California. Napa is a minimum of two hour drive from our facility. Eventually, agreements were made with a local health care provider to perform the annual examinations. I and many of our teammates currently participate in this medical monitoring evaluation. Due to HIPPA issues, it has become increasingly more difficult attain the actual number of participants in the program.

In the federal system approximately, one thousand four hundred and fourteen FEMA US&R members responded to the World Trade Center to support the search and rescue efforts. Approximately five hundred and ninety two responders opened Federal Worker Compensation Claims. Many of these claims were closed out just two months after the event. Many of the claimants were frustrated and confused in working through this process. Many of the claimants abandoned the federal workman's comp and used their own health care insurance. However, Federal workers compensation only covers $66 \frac{2}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ % of the claim.

On December 20, 2007, the Board of Directors from the Menlo Park Fire Protection District passed a resolution declaring members from the district who respond to a Federal disaster, will be covered under our departments workers compensation and insurance. This will assure that our department members are covered the same whether they are injured in Menlo Park or New York City.

Chairman Towns, we need a national program that will provide responders who came to New York and were exposed to toxins at ground zero the medical monitoring and treatment we need.

It is very disheartening to hear that the administration seems to be standing in the way of delivering and not working to get us the help we need.

We need not only health care but we also need to be compensated for our injuries.

I know that Rep. Maloney along with you Mr. Chairman, Mr. Nadler and Mr. Fossella are working on pushing legislation, HR 3543 that would make sure we have long term monitoring and treatment and be compensated for our injuries for every one including for those like my self who came from across the country to help. This legislation is supported by the national fire fighters union as well as the AFL-CIO.

It is very important to myself, as well as the many rescue workers who responded to the World Trade Center to continue the medical monitoring program. Although acute medical problems have been well documented to this point, the long term affects are uncertain so we need a stable national program.

I also want to mention two other bills HR 4158 & 4183 that will help support and protect specifically urban search and rescue team members like my self who are injured while working or on deployments.

In closing, It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve the members of my community and the citizens of the United States of America in their times of greatest need. I hope that the members of this Congress will see it fitting to protect those who give their lives to serve others.

Sincerely,

Frank Fraone
Operations Chief
CA-TF3 program Manager

cc: Chief Schapelhouman
Board of Directors, Menlo Park Fire