



# FIRE NEWS

Serving  
Fire & EMS  
Heroes  
Since 1973

VOLUME XXXIV, NO. 2

WWW.FIRENEWS.COM

OCTOBER 2006

Dear Editor,

As an Ex-Chief in the Wantagh Fire Department, I make it a habit to read the Fire News religiously, and I read your editorial "Are We Abandoning Our Heroes?" which appeared in your most recent edition. I am happy to report that finally, something is being done to protect volunteer firefighters, EMS workers and all those who spent time to rescue and recovery efforts in and around Ground Zero.

On August 14, 2006, the 9/11 Workers Compensation Bill

became law. This bill was written by Robert Grey of Grey & Grey, LLP, a Farmingdale workers' compensation and personal injury law firm, and was passed through the efforts of many dedicated organizations.

In brief, this law establishes a one year registration period for all workers and volunteers who participated in rescue, recovery or clean-up efforts between September 11, 2001 and September 11, 2002 at Ground Zero, or in any of the following areas: anywhere in Manhattan south of Canal or Pike Streets; on the barge operation between lower Manhattan and Staten Island; at the Staten Island Landfill, or at the New York City morgue.

For volunteer firefighters, EMS workers and any individual who volunteered their services in these areas, this is particularly important because the law now makes volunteers eligible to file a claim for Workers Compensation Benefits should they become ill due to their exposure. Further, their right to file a claim for benefits is preserved if and when they become sick, even if that is years or decades later.

To be eligible, however, you must register! Those we fail to register on or before August 14, 2007 will be prevented from ever filing a claim for Workers Compensation Benefits, even if they do develop a 9/11-related illness in the future.

Workers Compensation Benefits are important if you do become sick from a 9/11-related illness as compensation may pay for two-thirds of your weekly salary up to \$400, and may pay 100% of all of the medical expenses for your 9/11-related sickness or injury. A 9/11-related sickness or injury also includes mental conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Even individuals who are not normally covered under the State Workers Compensation Law, such as uniformed NYC Police, Fire and Sanitation workers, may be entitled to benefits if they served at the site as volunteers.

Further, individuals who have already filed compensation claims for 9/11-related illnesses should also register under this system in case a new condition develops which was not included in their initial claim. Even those who had a previous claim rejected, or who have a claim which would have been outside of the normal two-year statute of limitations for a compensation claim, should register and re-file, as the deadlines to do so have been extended.

For all persons who worked in the covered areas, the first and most important step is to register today. Forms are available by contacting our office at (516) 249-1342, or are available from the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health at [www.nycosh.org](http://www.nycosh.org).

Finally, in an effort to inform as many potentially affected people as possible, Robert Grey, the author of the 9/11 Workers Compensation Law, is available to address any

Fire Department or EMS corps to explain the law, the benefits to which your members may be entitled and to assist in the registration process. If interested, please contact me at the number above.

Your editorial was directly on point in that we need to do more to protect the 40,000 heroes who participated in rescue, recovery and clean-up efforts after September 11, 2001. This is an important first step in doing so.

Very truly yours,  
Steve Rhoads  
Wantagh F.D.