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## Heroes gasping at 9/11 asthma-rate shock

By FRANKIE EDOZIEN

Rescue and recovery workers who labored at Ground Zero in the wake of 9/11 have developed asthma at a rate 12 times higher than normal, data released by city health officials yesterday show.

Of 25,748 rescue workers surveyed, 926, or 3.6 percent, developed asthma

after working at the toxic site. Of workers who were there 90 days or longer, 7 percent developed asthma.

"The dust from the World Trade Center collapse appears to have had significant respiratory health effects at least for people who worked at the site," Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Frieden said.

Workers who wore masks

or respirators from the onset had a lower risk of developing asthma than those who didn't, according to the data, culled from the World Trade Center Health Registry surveys.

According to the latest study, workers who wore masks or respirators on Sept. 11 and 12, 2001, reported new asthma at a rate of 4 percent and 2.9 per-

cent, respectively. Those who didn't use them reported at rates of 6.3 and 4.5 percent.

Robert Grey, an attorney who specializes in workers' compensation issues, said he expects the new numbers won't stop the city from challenging the compensation claims of 9/11 workers.

"There has been a discon-

nect between the Law Department and the Health Department for quite some time now," Grey said.

"It would not surprise me if the new report gets ignored by the Law Department because [it has] taken a position that they have an obligation to protect the city's money by contesting these claims."

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