

More than 1,100 have cancer after 9/11

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Reggie Hilaire was a rookie cop on September 11, 2001. He worked at ground zero for 11 days beside his colleagues -- many of them, including Hilaire, not wearing a mask. He was later assigned to a landfill in Staten Island, where debris from the World Trade Center was dumped.

For about 60 days between 2001 and 2002, the New York police officer was surrounded by dust.

In 2005, Hilaire was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. He underwent surgery and radiation. Just months later his doctor told him he also had multiple myeloma, a blood cancer that multiplies the body's plasma cells to dangerous levels.

It's a cancer that usually strikes much later in life. Hilaire was 34.

More than 1,100 people who worked or lived near the World Trade Center on 9/11 have been diagnosed with cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

These are the first numbers released since the program was expanded a year ago.

Hundreds of chemical compounds, among them known carcinogens, were present in the dust surrounding ground zero. Potential cancer-causing agents such as asbestos that coated the World Trade Center buildings' lower columns, and benzene, a component of jet fuel that caused uncontrollable fires when planes barreled into the twin towers, have long been a cancer concern for researchers. Scientists were also worried about the high volume of particulates and gases inhaled by responders, survivors and people who lived in the area.

A long lag time makes it particularly difficult to study the link. Cancer doesn't develop quickly after breathing in something toxic, the way asthma might. Instead, leukemia can take five to six years to develop, and solid tumors can take 10 to 20 years.

Researchers found firefighters who worked at ground zero were 19% more likely to develop cancer than firefighters who did not. According to the 2011 study, published in *The Lancet* medical journal, the increase occurred during the first seven years after 9/11.

One theory about how the cancers may have developed so soon among responders is that the unique characteristics of ground zero dust, and the sheer number of chemicals contained in it, may have accelerated disease.

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