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## WTC Workers Line Up for Health Tests

By Karen Matthews

Associated Press Writer

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NEW YORK — A mobile health clinic started offering medical exams Monday for day laborers who cleaned buildings around the World Trade Center collapse site, and workers began lining up before the door opened.

In addition to free health screenings, the clinic will fit respirators for hundreds of workers, mainly immigrant day laborers without health insurance, who have been cleaning dust and debris from offices and apartments.

Many firefighters who raced to save victims of the terror attacks are facing health problems because of dust and contaminants at the disaster site. A few hundred are on medical leave or working light duty because of respiratory illness including asthma, persistent cough and diminished lung capacity.

Darwin Maldonado, one of several dozen workers hoping for an appointment at the clinic Monday, said he had spent a month cleaning buildings next to the trade center site.

He said he was given a respirator for protection against contaminants but workers at some buildings were not.

"Some people were working without a respirator and without training, and they don't know they were exposed to asbestos and fiberglass," Maldonado said.

Among the substances that escaped from the 1.2 million tons of debris at ground zero are asbestos, benzene, dioxin, and polychlorinated biphenyls, known as PCBs. They have been linked to cancer but experts said that in many cases the exposures were low enough that the risk appears to be small.

Private researchers who examined the interiors of apartments and offices near ground zero have found considerably higher levels of asbestos contamination than those reported by state and federal officials whose tests involved outdoor air samples, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported Sunday.

Meanwhile, the owner of a neighboring building that was destroyed hours after the collapse of the twin towers said Monday he intends to break ground for a new building on the spot before September.

Developer Larry Silverstein issued a statement after Crain's New York Business reported that a tentative groundbreaking had been set for Sept. 11, 2002, the first anniversary of the attack.

"Because of obvious sensitivities, we would never consider breaking ground on that tragic date or any day close to it for a World Trade Center project," Silverstein said Monday. "As a matter of fact, we hope to break ground significantly earlier than that date."

His building, the 47-story 7 World Trade Center, caught fire and collapsed in the early evening of Sept. 11. No one was killed. The office building was not part of the original six-building trade center complex.

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