

When the World Trade Center was built decades ago, asbestos was used as a building material, including as fireproofing that was sprayed onto the beams of the building during construction. A number of workers who were involved in the construction later developed asbestos related diseases like malignant mesothelioma (a virulent form of cancer caused almost solely by asbestos exposure). Some of those cancer victims sought legal assistance, including from Martin & Jones, seeking compensation to help with medical expenses incurred in treating their cancers.

When the terrorist attacks on the Towers occurred on September 11, 2001, the first responders heroically put their own safety at risk in the effort to help the victims in the buildings. At the time, asbestos was the last thing on anyone's mind. However, those first responders were heavily exposed to asbestos, as well as many other airborne contaminants in the dust, including glass fibers, gypsum, lead, benzene and other hazardous chemicals. Due to the huge volume of asbestos used in the construction of the World Trade Center, the first responders after the attacks were exposed to an intense concentration of asbestos fibers.

The latency period of malignant mesothelioma is believed to be typically between about fifteen and forty years. That means that as of today, ten years after the 9/11 attacks, there probably have not yet been any cases of mesothelioma diagnosed as a result of asbestos exposures sustained by first responders and other people in the vicinity of the Towers. However, in the years to come, it would not be surprising if some of those people are diagnosed with mesothelioma from the asbestos they breathed into their lungs in the days and weeks following the attacks.

Currently the federal 9/11 Health and Compensation Act provides some compensation to firefighters injured during the rescue period, but the Act does not cover cancers caused by exposures to asbestos. The bill is scheduled to be revisited in 2012, and at that time, if not sooner, it should be amended to cover cases of mesothelioma and other cancers caused by exposures to asbestos after the 9/11 attacks.