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POST opinion editorials



EEK! ASBESTOS!

August 27, 2002 --

As if New York's Bravest haven't enough on their minds, the union that represents them is working overtime to make matters worse.

The Uniformed Firefighters Association is complaining that upwards of 200 firetrucks may be contaminated with lethal residue from the collapse of the World Trade Center almost one year ago.

A study commissioned by the union and an activist "watchdog" group, the New York Environmental Law and Justice Project, found that five rigs contain asbestos levels above federal safety standards.

They then extrapolated these findings over the 200 sets of apparatus present for varying lengths of time at Ground Zero - and proclaimed a potential emergency.



Ho, hum - here we go again.

Asbestos - a certain *type* of asbestos, that is - has been demonstrated to be a factor in lung cancer when ingested over a lengthy period of time.

But it's not plutonium.



You find asbestos fibers on a firetruck? Squirt the rig with a *firehose* and guess what? The asbestos goes away.



It's in apparatus seat cushions?

Vacuum them.

It's in the air conditioners?



Change some filters.

Problem solved.

We understand what the Environmental Project is up to - mischief.



Stitch Squeezes Theater Kids

SEARCH

But for the *UFA* to trade on 9/11 heroism in this way is a mystery.

Says Phil McArdle, the union's health and safety officer: "We did a great job in respects to locating the dead, why is not such a great job being done in respect to the living?"

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Maybe it's about creating a climate for a firefighters' pay raise. Maybe it's union faction-fighting. Or both.

Either way, it's unseemly.



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