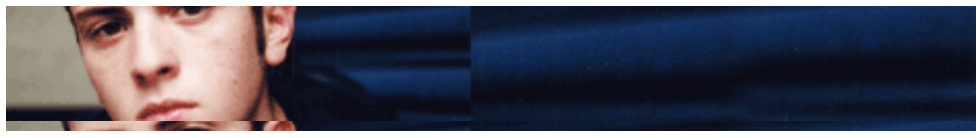


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# U.S. to Pay to Clean Trade Center Fire Trucks

By KEVIN FLYNN

**T**he Federal Emergency Management Agency will pay to clean as many as 200 New York City fire trucks exposed to toxic substances during the collapse of the World Trade Center, federal and city officials said yesterday.

About 200 Fire Department vehicles were at the trade center during the 24-hour period after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack. Tests determined that several of them had unsafe asbestos levels, and they were decontaminated, the officials said.

But a dispute arose over what to do with other trucks that had been put back into use after tests indicated they were not contaminated. Union officials representing firefighters have been demanding that the trucks receive extensive cleaning, too, because, they said, the tests were insufficient to determine whether the vehicles were safe.

Fire officials have described the testing as reliable, and said it was impractical to clean the trucks.

Federal officials muted the debate yesterday when they said they would pay for such cleaning, even in cases in which the level of contaminants fell below federal safety guidelines.

James McIntyre, a spokesman for FEMA, said the agency had always been willing to pay the cleaning costs.

But an official of the Uniformed Firefighters Association, Thomas Manley, said he did not believe there had been any agreement on the issue until yesterday, when he and Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton met with the director of the federal agency, Joseph M. Allbaugh.

During the brief conversation, outside the funeral in Deer Park, N.Y., for Deputy Chief Raymond M. Downey, who was among those who died at the trade center on Sept. 11, Mr. Allbaugh agreed to review reimbursing New York City for the cost of the extensive cleaning, the offices of Mr. Manley and Senator Clinton announced.

City officials said yesterday they would do additional testing to determine whether any of the department's other trucks required full decontamination.

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Those that do not, said Francis X. Gribbon, a Fire Department spokesman, will be given a thorough cleaning that will include dismantling parts of the truck, including hard-to-access areas like air-conditioning vents.

Mr. Manley said he was satisfied that, after such a cleaning, which typically costs several thousand dollars per truck, firefighters would no longer be at risk of respiratory ailments related to the contamination.

"They can call it cleaning. I call it decontamination," he said.

"As long as they're clean and they don't have any contaminants, I don't care what they call it."

Federal officials have already said that they will destroy hundreds of private vehicles that were recovered from ground zero and were contaminated enough to show high asbestos levels.

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