

9/11 responders face slow process for Zadroga funds

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Anthony Flammia estimates he is losing \$50,000 a year after 9/11 health issues forced him out of the job he loved, being a New York City police officer.

Flammia, who helped evacuate the towers on Sept. 11, had to retire, in part because of his post-traumatic stress disorder, along with reactive airway disease and asthma, which doctors say he contracted after breathing in contaminated air at the site.

He is applying to the federal Victim Compensation Fund for money to make up for his missing wages. The fund was created when the Zadroga Act became law last December.

However, one year later, responders like Flammia are still waiting to receive money and muddling through paperwork.

"The process is a little slow," he told Metro. "I'm hearing a lot of frustration."

A Department of Justice spokeswoman said that 1,500 people have registered online, starting the claims process, and fewer than 50 have submitted the first form in the application.

To make do in the meantime, Flammia said, responders like him are relying on credit cards and cashing out retirement funds.

The Department of Justice does not yet have an estimate of when funds will be funneled to responders.

Because the paperwork is lengthy – finding medical records, work records – it takes months to apply, said attorney Daniel Hansen, who represents hundreds of responders.

"We're recreating things from 10 years ago," he said.

Flammia said the money can't come soon enough – he already had to tap into his retirement.

Others are worse off, he said. "There are people out there that have cancers and everything else, that are on oxygen every day," he said. "Those types of guys are living day by day."



Credit of John Feal

John Feal, from the FealGood Foundation, celebrated the Zadroga Act's passage with New York senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Charles Schumer.

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