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9/11 fund excludes mentally affected



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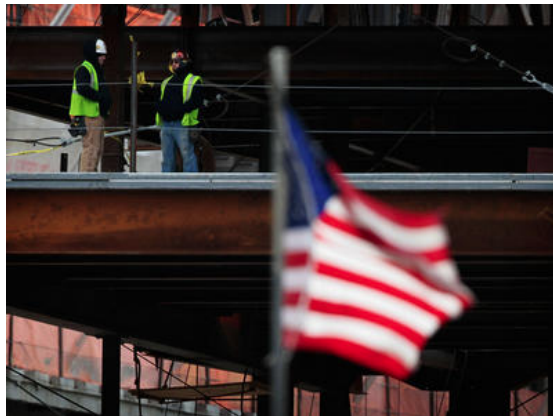
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Nightmares from 9/11 are not as visible as cancer, but to some New Yorkers, the symptoms are just as haunting.

Yesterday, Sheila Birnbaum, special master of the \$2.8 billion Victims' Compensation Fund, announced that funds will not be available for those suffering from mental trauma following 9/11. The fund was created to help first responders and those who lived or worked near the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

Through a separate program, those people can still receive health care coverage. But the Compensation Fund was intended to reimburse people injured and unable to work, and under the proposed rules, mental health alone would not be a reason to apply, according to Birnbaum.

Attorney Daniel Hansen said many of the responders and residents he represents suffer solely from mental trauma.



CHRIS HONDROS/GETTY IMAGES
Construction workers stand in the 4 World Trade Center building shortly after legislation to provide medical care for rescue workers, firefighters and other responders to the September 11, 2001 attacks passed Congress.

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"If you have ... 9/11-related PTSD that has caused you or your family to take a financial hit, you are as entitled to compensation for that as you would be if you had a

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of his clients cleaned neighboring buildings after the towers fell and still has emotional scars, but no physical injuries. A corrections officer “talks about unearthing materials and finding a woman’s body with a child’s hand,” said Hansen.

permanent lung problem.”
 -Kimberly Flynn

“Unfortunately for the people that are suffering from the debilitating cases of post-traumatic stress disorder, the line was drawn against them,” he said.

“We think it very much sends the wrong message,” said Kimberly Flynn, director of 9/11 Environmental Action. “What if you worked

downtown, and you fled for your life that day and you were unable to return to work? You didn’t want to come back to the scene of the crime.”

Birnbaum’s proposal is not set in stone: The public has 45 days to weigh in.

Still others understand there’s only so much money to go around.

“If you compensate everybody who actually saw the planes hit the tower, there wouldn’t be enough money,” said John Feal, who runs the Feal-Good Foundation for 9/11 responders. But he argued that PTSD is a physical ailment – “It’s stress physically and emotionally to the body.”

Fund footprint

Birnbaum also enlarged the area where people could request compensation. Before, the zone open to claims from residents was within Reade and Centre Streets and Thames and Nassau, but now, residents south of Reade, Centre and the Brooklyn Bridge are eligible to apply for compensation.

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