

## BATTERY PARK BROADSHEET – DECEMBER 9, 2008

### Lower Manhattan air quality improves

More construction vehicles equipped with diesel particulate filters



The use of ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel in and around Lower Manhattan's construction sites has contributed to a marked improvement in air quality. (Photo: Robert Simko)

Since 9/11, air quality sensors have been part of the Downtown landscape. At last night's meeting of Community Board 1's World Trade Center Redevelopment Committee, the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center (LMCC) announced that those sensors were reporting a marked decrease in pollutants.

"I'm happy to report that I have nothing but good news," said Tom Kunkel, the LMCCC's Director of Environmental Compliance and Coordination. In the three years that the LMCCC has been monitoring particulate air pollution, 2008 has, thus far, shown the lowest concentrations for particulate matter as small as 2.5 micrometers in diameter. This means that both coarse particulates - often the result of crushing or grinding processes such as those found in construction and demolition - and fine particulates, such as those produced by internal combustion, are at a three-year low for the area around the World Trade Center

site. Concentrations were particularly low, Mr. Kunkle noted, for the months of August and November.

The success is due at least in part to a well-thought-out and maintained vehicle fleet, as well as a heightened volume of inspections for dust and vehicle maintenance at 60 work sites throughout Lower Manhattan. 2008 has seen the highest use of ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel in and around Lower Manhattan's construction sites. "We have thousands of gallons being used every single month," said Mr. Kunkle. "Right now there are about 109 construction vehicles that have diesel particulate filters on them - that's the highest concentration of vehicles we've ever had down here, and the most in compliance [with federal regulations]. We also have about 85 vehicles being used on the construction sites that are lower than 50 horsepower."

Mr. Kunkle noted that the only elevated levels were those of silica, a common mineral found in granite, sandstone and other building materials, which can cause respiratory irritation when finely ground during construction, and that such elevations were found early in the year, when several buildings north of the World Trade Center site were refacing their facades. Even with such silica levels, Mr. Kunkle emphasized that Lower Manhattan has not exceeded any limits within the national standards for air quality.

Indeed, in a later presentation on the abatement and deconstruction of Fiterman Hall, Richard Dalessio of the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York concurred. "In the beginning of the [Fiterman Hall] project... every other week [our monitors] were having silica exceedences. They've become very, very rare. Our data matches what Tom [Kunkel] had to say about air quality Downtown in general."

Finally, it seems, we can start to breathe a little easier.

- *Evan Simko-Bednarski*