

Beat: News

3 retired New York firefighters die from 9/11-related illnesses

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USPA News - Three retired New York City firefighters who are believed to have contracted cancer by inhaling toxic particles at Ground Zero after the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center have died just hours apart, fire officials said on Thursday. Lt.

Howard Bischoff, 58, and firefighters Robert Leaver, 56, and Daniel Heglund, 58, all died on Monday within hours of one another. Thousands of people who responded to the attacks on the World Trade Center have been diagnosed with a number of health problems over the years, and Monday's deaths raise the number of firefighters who have died of such illnesses to at least 92. "Losing three firefighters on the same day to WTC-related illnesses is a painful reminder that, 13 years later, we continue to pay a terrible price for the Department's heroic efforts on September 11th," FDNY Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said. Heglund had been with the New York City Fire Department for 21 years before he retired in March 2003, when he was assigned to Rescue 4. Lt. Bischoff, with Ladder 149, had been with the department for 19 years while Leaver, with Ladder 202, had been with the department for 20 years. Bischoff and Leaver both retired in May 2003. All three firefighters responded to Ground Zero to rescue people after two hijacked passenger planes crashed into both towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, causing the skyscrapers to collapse. Toxic dust and debris was spread across Lower Manhattan due to the collapse, which is said to have caused health problems for rescue workers and civilians who were in the area. As part of the 2001 terrorist attacks, al-Qaeda terrorists also hijacked two other passenger planes, including one which crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The fourth, United Flight 93, crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers tried to retake the aircraft. Nearly 3,000 people were killed in the attacks, but dozens more have died of related illnesses.

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