

workers to the dust generated by the collapse of the buildings. Environmental monitoring and chemical characterization of WTC dust have revealed a wide variety of potentially toxic constituents, although much of the dust was pulverized cement. Possibly because of the high alkalinity of WTC dust, significant cough, wheeze, and phlegm production occurred among firefighters and cleanup crews. New cough and wheeze syndromes also occurred among local residents. Heavier exposure to WTC dust among New York City firefighters was associated with accelerated decline of lung function over the first year after the disaster. More recently, concerns have been raised about risk of interstitial lung disease, especially of a granulomatous nature.

■ OCCUPATIONAL RESPIRATORY CARCINOGENS

Exposures at work have been estimated to contribute to 10% of all lung cancer cases. In addition to asbestos, other agents either proven or suspected to be respiratory carcinogens include acrylonitrile, arsenic compounds, beryllium, bis(chloromethyl) ether, chromium (hexavalent), formaldehyde (nasal), isopropanol (nasal sinuses), mustard gas, nickel carbonyl (nickel smelting), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (coke oven emissions and diesel exhaust), secondhand tobacco smoke, silica (both mining and processing), talc (possible asbestos contamination in both mining and milling), vinyl chloride (sarcomas), wood (nasal), and uranium. Workers at risk of radiation-related lung cancer include not only those involved in mining or processing uranium but also those exposed in underground mining operations of other ores where radon daughters may be emitted from rock formations.

■ ASSESSMENT OF DISABILITY

Disability is the term used to describe the decreased ability to work due to the effects of a medical condition. Physicians are generally able to assess physiologic dysfunction, or *impairment*, but the rating of disability for compensation of loss of income also involves nonmedical factors such as the education and employability of the individual. The disability rating scheme differs with the