BY MARYANN BRINLEY

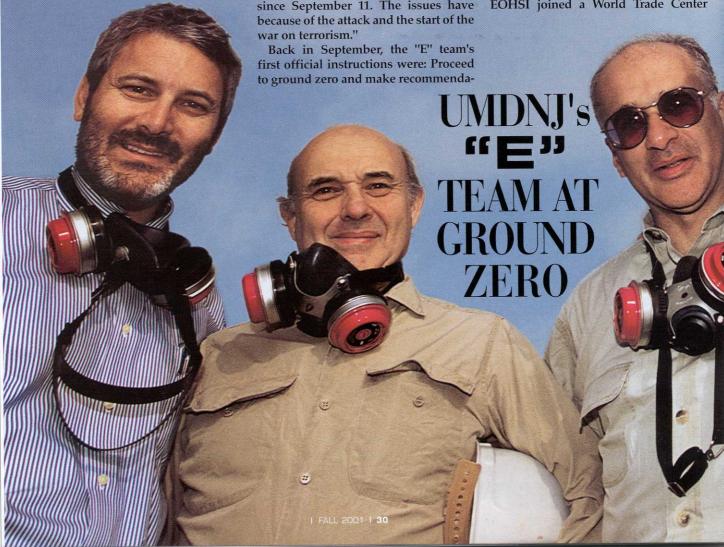
ew twists in the story of the personal and toxic nightmare in New York turn up almost every day. There are good ones: Containers of freon (a potentially dangerous refrigerant) were discovered in the disemboweled basement of the World Trade Center completely intact. And there are bad ones: The chief pulmonary physician for city firefighters is treating thousands of rescuers for persistent coughing and chest pain unlike any ordinary post-fire congestion.

The unprecedented need for experts on September 11 brought officials to UMDNI's School of Public Health (SPH) the day after. Then, SPH asked the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI) to jump in. Raging fires, collapsing buildings, clouds of dust and smoke, physically treacherous conditions, decaying body parts, cutaneous and blood borne pathogens, noise pollution, burning rubble, toxic substances leaking into the ground, water and air...even rats were on the disaster agenda. Heading for ground zero, a UMDNJ "E" team of five specialists left the parking lot in Piscataway at 5:30 am on Monday, September 17. They've been on the case

Paul Lioy, PhD, acting associate director of EOHSI says, "Though we've never had to deal with events like these before," EOHSI experts are equipped to respond to crises, including the ones that have been placed center stage as a result of the ongoing environmental onslaught. "Let me put it this way. Our jobs really haven't changed at EOHSI since September 11. The issues have because of the attack and the start of the war on terrorism."

tions to insure health and safety at the site as well as down wind. Urging rescuers to wear respirators to prevent harmful exposures was just one directive made by the UMDNJ crew. Meanwhile, with funds from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) support, the work goes on. Samples of ground zero dust and smoke are being analyzed to determine the physical and chemical characteristics so that risks from inhaling or ingesting can be understood. Lioy and Panos Georgopoulos, PhD, co-director of EOHSI's Exposure and Risk Modeling Center, are also collaborating with the EPA's National Exposure Research Laboratory on a design and reconstruction of the possible exposures from the collapse and fire on that sunny September morning as well as the resulting plume which continued for weeks.

Unanswered questions, which seem to change direction and tone daily, are epidemic in the wake of these incursions into the American way of life. To help put a lid on unnecessary anxiety, EOHSI joined a World Trade Center





monary and hematologic disease, and the effects of exposure to carcinogens including benzene and asbestos. Kipen studied Persian Gulf War health issues for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and conducted research on post-traumatic stress.

Michael Gochfeld, MD, PhD, director of the RWJMS occupational medicine residency training program, has a background in toxicology, neurobehavioral

of the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, is a toxicologist with extensive knowledge of chemical carcinogens.

Mark G. Robson, PhD, MPH, director of the division of environmental and occupational health at SPH, is trained in public health and is an expert in exposure and effects of pesticides. Robson was able to address the issue of rodent control. The last thing New York City needs is a rat population interacting with rescue workers.