The following topics were discussed during the September 9, 2015 conference call with law firms representing VCF claimants.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: The Special Master will have an in-person meeting with law firms on **September 28, 2015 from 2:30-4:30 p.m.** to cover important policies and procedures related to the filing deadline and subsequent shutdown of the fund.
See page 2 for additional details and information on how to RSVP for this meeting.

- **VCF Statistics:** We posted an updated statistics report to the website earlier today and have been fielding a number of requests from the media. The report includes comparisons to our statistics last year at this time and shows the increase in the numbers of decisions rendered and claims paid.
- **Farewell to Pat Houser:** It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Pat, who has been a key member of our team and a valuable resource for the law firms. We know you will miss her and we thank her for her hard work and wish her a wonderful retirement. Colleen King will be taking over as the point of contact for law firms and will send out information shortly about scheduling law firm "office hours" in our New York office.
- **Claims Processing Updates:** As the October 3, 2016 deadline approaches, we have started to plan in earnest for the final year of activity, which is certain to be a hectic year. As part of this effort, we continue to focus on the goal of issuing decisions as quickly as possible. We strongly encourage you to file claims as early as possible – the sooner you submit them, the sooner we can process them, which will make it much easier for all of us when the deadline arrives. We have several new efforts underway:
    - **Fast Track Process:** This process started one month ago and was developed to get non-economic loss claims through faster. If you submit Eligibility and Compensation forms simultaneously with all necessary exhibits, we will evaluate both forms together, which eliminates having to handle a claim once for Eligibility and a second time for Compensation. Once the reviewer's work is complete, the entire claim is sent to the Special Master's office for approval. Claimants still have the same appeal rights and can still amend the claim in the future if warranted. Approximately half of our review team is focusing on these claims, leaving the remainder of the team to focus on the more time-consuming claims.

      If you know a claim is going to be for non-economic loss only, we strongly encourage you to submit both Eligibility and Compensation at the same time to take advantage of the Fast Track process. You should begin to see loss decisions coming to you more quickly as a result of this process.
    - **Missing Information Process:** We are reducing the time period during which we will put a claim on hold waiting for responses to missing information. For Eligibility missing information requests, you will have 30 days to respond to the request or the claim will be denied. We will only send one Missing Information letter to inform you of the results of our initial review before denying the claim if the information is not received within 30 days. For Compensation, we will send one Missing Information letter with a 30-day deadline for responding. Consistent with our current procedures, we will process the claim after that deadline and issue a decision based on the information that has been submitted by the time the claim is evaluated.

      If you cannot get the missing information to us within the 30 days, you can still amend the claim once the information is available. We encourage you to amend the claim so as soon as possible after compiling the information.

      The time period for each claim is based on the letter you received. We will follow the process as outlined in the letter specific to each claim.
- **Help us help you:** The single best way to help us process claims is for you to submit Eligibility, Compensation and all of the necessary information the first time you submit the claim. Or, if the claim has already been submitted, send or upload all of the missing information at the same time. This allows us to touch each claim one time and complete one comprehensive review, which is the most efficient, fastest way to a decision on the claim.

P.O. Box 34500, Washington, D.C. 20043

- **Communications with Claimants:** There are any number of reasons why communicating with claimants can be challenging, and we know that you all are trying to stay in contact with your clients and get their claims completed. Claimants do complain from time to time that their attorneys are not being responsive or they do not know what's happening on their claim. When a claimant tells us that they don't know what is happening on their claim or what is missing from their claim, we will provide them with this information over the phone and add them to written VCF correspondence. This is not intended to cause headaches for the law firms but is an effort to speed the processing of the claim.
- **Reminders:**
  - **Compensation claims processing:** If a claim contains inconsistent or contradicting information, it slows down our processing because we have to piece together the information to understand and explain the conflicts. It is very helpful if you provide a roadmap or other letter of explanation laying out and explaining the inconsistencies to help guide our review.
  - **Provide <u>one</u> copy of each document <u>one</u> time in <u>one</u> way:** Please do NOT upload, fax, mail, etc. the same document – and please do not provide the same document more than once (for example, once with the Eligibility submission and once with the Compensation submission). Each unique document only needs to be submitted one time and via one method. Providing the same document in multiple ways or multiple times slows us down considerably as we look at every single page of every document submitted for a claim
  - **Private Physician claims:** As a reminder, if you know a claimant is not being treated by the WTC Health Program for a claimed condition, please submit the Private Physician package <u>with</u> the Eligibility Form. You do not need to wait for us to request the Private Physician information and should submit it as early in the process as possible.
- **Update on WTC Health Program Disability Evaluation Process:** There are approximately 150 claims in the process as this time. We have heard from some of you that there are some issues for claimants in the National Program and we are working with NIOSH to make sure the process is working as planned. Please notify us if you are having issues when trying to make appointments or if you have general feedback on the process. The information is very helpful to us in our discussions with NIOSH. For more details on the process, see FAQ #6.31.1 on our website.
- **NYCERS claimants:** We have tried very hard to work with NYCERS to get the information needed for claims. They have had some personnel changes and at this point, it will be easier for everyone if claimants request the information directly from NYCERS and then submit the information with their claim. We believe it will be better – and will allow for faster claim processing - if you and your client gather the information directly.

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IMPORTANT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 28, 2015

As our October 3, 2016 filing deadline approaches, Special Master Sheila Birnbaum invites you to attend an in-person meeting for law firms to discuss the year ahead. The meeting will cover important policies and procedures related to the filing deadline and subsequent shutdown of the fund. **We strongly encourage each firm to send at least one representative to this meeting.** We will have limited conference call capability for those who cannot attend in person, but cannot guarantee sound quality or the ability to ask questions for those who call in.

Date and Time: Monday, September 28, 2015 from 2:30pm to 4:30pm.

Location:
26 Federal Plaza
Conference Room J – 6th Floor
New York, NY 10278

RSVP: If you plan to attend the meeting, please **RSVP to Colleen King by Friday, September 18** with your name and the firm you represent. You do not need to RSVP if you are not attending the meeting.