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AMERICA RESPONDS

ND lab probing Trade Center dust

By **CAROL DRAEGER**
Tribune Staff Writer

University of Notre Dame researchers have analyzed bullets from murder cases, studied moon rocks, dissected brain tissue and combed through wreckage particles of the 1996 TWA Flight 800 mid-air plane explosion.

Now university scientists are doing their part to help New York investigators ensure the rubble of the World Trade Center does not pose a health risk to rescuers and Manhattan residents.

Last week New York University Department of Environmental Medicine shipped nine samples of dust and debris from the Trade Center to Notre Dame's Department of Civil Engineering and Geological Sciences' laboratory.

"We hope to have preliminary data completed by the middle of the week," said Clive Neal, professor of

civil engineering and geological sciences at Notre Dame.

His partner in the project, Jinesh Jain, is a university environmental scientist. Jain said the samples of grayish-white matter contain about 2 to 3 grams of dust.

The task is to test the debris to determine if there are any toxic metals or harmful contaminants in it, said Jain.

"Rescuers working at the WTC and also area residents might have inhaled the dust at the time of the building's collapse," said Jain.

"We just want to make sure there's no long-term health effects associated with inhaling the dust."

Jain, who is from India, and Neal, who is British, say they don't want publicity for their work or the 10-year-old laboratory; they simply want to contribute to the recovery effort.

"I'm a little hesitant. I don't want

to make a big splash about this," said Neal. "I don't want publicity for the lab; it's more to publicize that everyone's doing their bit," he said.

The laboratory has conducted analysis for the Environmental Protection Agency and has been at the center of some high-profile cases, including the Paul Deguch murder investigation.

"The lab is so diverse, we've analyzed blood, moon rocks, meteorites ... you name it, we've analyzed it," said Neal.

He and Jain feel proud to be a part of the national cleanup effort in the tragedy's aftermath.

"It's a global catastrophe and everyone has to pull together," Neal said.

Jain, who's been at Notre Dame for six years, agreed.

"We feel good that we are making a contribution to help people," he said.