The American Council on Science Health is sad to announce the passing of internationally renowned environmental scientist Dr. Paul Lioy, 68, professor of environmental and occupational health at the Rutgers University School of Public Health.

In 1999-2000, along with Dr. C. Everett Koop and fifteen other luminaries, Dr. Lioy was on a blue-ribbon panel convened by the Council to analyze the environmental effects of phthalates: plastic softeners found in vinyl toys and medical devices [2], after anti-science groups had engaged in a public relations campaign to promote fear and doubt about them. The analysis published in the peer-reviewed journal Medscape General Medicine [3] found that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission were correct and the public was not at risk, which dealt a severe blow to groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council and "Health Care Without Harm," which had been manufacturing a controversy about them.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Lioy was one of the first scientists dispatched to conduct an analysis of the dust and its effect on humans. Though the government was concerned about well-publicized risks like asbestos, Lioy knew that was unlikely to be the public health culprit. He and others determined that the lingering cough and respiratory symptoms suffered by first responders and residents were most likely caused by highly alkaline dust which irritated the linings of the lungs. This made it possible to provide accurate treatment, rather than have medical professionals chasing asbestos concerns, as environmental groups had insisted would be the issue.

Lioy also was called in for research on oil spills, ozone pollution and household pesticides. He is survived by his mother, his wife, a sister, his son and two grandchildren.
The American Council on Science and Health and the entire evidence-based community mourns his passing.


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