

## Retired NYPD sergeant with 9/11 cancer fighting city for disability pension

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Retired NYPD Sgt. Sean Cameron (Handout)

Retired NYPD Sgt. Sean Cameron is in the fight of his life, against not only the 9/11-related cancer that has ravaged his body, but with the city, which has denied him a disability pension.

The Police Pension Fund last month denied the retired cop's request for a 9/11 disability pension, saying they can't confirm Cameron spent the requisite 40 hours at the World Trade Center site needed to get the pension.

"They're telling me they can only find 20 hours ... that I'm 20 hours shy," Cameron told the Daily News from his home in South Carolina. "They're saying, 'We know you have a cancer from Ground Zero, but you just weren't there long enough to qualify for a pension.' "

Cameron told The News he raced to Ground Zero after the terror attacks and his Stage 4 liver cancer has been inextricably linked to the toxins he breathed in that day.

Now he's suing the city to get the disability pension he says he deserves.

The NYPD transit cop had just finished his shift when terrorists rammed jumbo jets into the twin towers on Sept. 11, 2001.

Fearing that his father, who worked in one of the buildings, was caught in the collapse, the 52-year-old raced to Ground Zero and helped out where he could.

As he waded through the crowds fleeing massive plumes of toxic dust, he ended up at a Burger King assisting about a dozen people looking for shelter inside, according to his lawsuit.

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“As the only member of the NYPD in that Burger King, many approached me for reassurance and other information as to what was taking place and as to whether we were under attack,” he wrote in his affidavit. “I did my best to keep everyone there calm and repeatedly encouraged them not to leave until it was safe to do so.”

The NYPD never logged his time at Ground Zero on 9/11, the cop said in his suit, because “records were haphazardly kept in my district [and others] during this period.”

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“A lot of records on that day were lost,” Cameron explained.

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“I don’t think this is right at all,” he told The News as he prepares for hospice care. “I should have been approved, but it took them like, five minutes to deny me.”

Luckily, Cameron’s father escaped the towers before they fell.

Cameron was diagnosed with Stage 4 liver cancer shortly after he retired in 2017.



Workers search for victims in the remains of the World Trade Center. (Maisel, Todd)

He receives a basic NYPD pension of about \$48,000 a year, which is about half a sergeant’s basic salary.

A disability pension would be 75% of his salary tax-free — a \$20,000 a year financial boost his family will need, he said.

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His attorney Timothy McEnaney said the city delayed Cameron's hearing 17 times before rejecting his claim.

"The city has had every opportunity to do the decent thing here, by fairly considering all the evidence. Instead, they've decided force us to litigate the case of this very sick NYPD Officer," McEnaney said. "It's disturbing that the city would so callously ignore the clear intent of the World Trade Center Disability Law, the entire purpose of which is to help first responders who have so obviously become disabled by World Trade Center-related conditions."

But the city is sticking to its guns.

"We applaud this officer for his service and are sympathetic to his current health situation," city Law Department spokesman Nick Paolucci said. "The Pension Board is obligated to follow the law and grant benefits accordingly."

As the lawsuit makes its way through New York Supreme Court, all Cameron can do is wait.

"I have no quality of life at all," he said. "It's just pain all the time."

**Thomas Tracy**

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Born and bred in Brooklyn, crime reporter Thomas Tracy has been covering the NYPD for more than a decade. He joined the Daily News in January 2013.