



AP Images

## **NYC Firefighter Deaths Prompt Request for Vax Inquiry**

A New York City union leader is calling for investigations into three unusual firefighter deaths. Uniformed Fire Officers Association President James McCarthy wants the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) to determine if city-mandated COVID-19 jabs contributed to the fatalities.

Each of the deceased was on duty at the time of his death. Co-workers found Lieutenant Joseph Maiello, 53, dead in his Staten Island firehouse on December 26 at the end of a Christmas shift. A 22-year veteran, Maiello was

# The New American

Author: [Rebecca Terrell](#)

Date: February 24, 2022



one of the brave rescuers who responded to the tragic events at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, surviving the collapse of the North Tower and continuing for months in subsequent rescue and recovery efforts. [FDNY](#) said that he leaves behind a wife and two teenage children. New York Daily News [reported](#) that Maiello had preexisting health conditions, and the U.S. Fire Administration later [announced](#) the cause of death as “an apparent heart attack.”

He was the second New York firefighter to die suddenly since the city implemented a COVID-19 vaccine [mandate](#) for first responders in November. He was preceded in death by probationary firefighter Vincent Malveaux, age 31, who died during training on December 3. Malveaux served as an EMT during the pandemic and had completed six weeks of an 18-week course at the FDNY Training Academy on Randall’s Island, according to a New York ABC [affiliate](#). Then-fire commissioner Daniel Nigro said Malveaux was nearing the end of a functional skills exercise when he passed out. An ambulance rushed him to Harlem Hospital where he never regained consciousness and passed away with his parents at his bedside.

On February 16, a third fireman fell, this time at his firehouse in Far Rockaway, Queens, after what [FDNY](#) described as a “medical episode.” Jesse Gerhard, 33, was an EMT and seven-year FDNY veteran who collapsed at his firehouse and died at St. John’s Hospital a short time later. He was honored for bravery once in his career and is survived by his parents, brother, and sister-in-law. The department’s report did not state a cause of death, but media [indicate](#) that a two-alarm house fire Gerhard had helped battle the day before may have been to blame. City officials prepared for more than 20,000 to attend Gerhard’s funeral service on February 23, which the department live-streamed here:

FDNY members, family, and friends gather for the funeral of Firefighter Jesse Gerhard.

<https://t.co/2zT9fZfdUB>

— FDNY (@FDNY) [February 23, 2022](#)

Of the deaths, McCarthy told the New York Daily News, “That’s a significant amount of people in a very short time. “The vaccine is a concern with our members because it is something new that is being put into our bodies. It could be a factor.” The news outlet [said](#) that an FDNY spokesman pledged to work with McCarthy’s group but said the deaths are still under investigation.

McCarthy had previously [spoken out](#) against the mayor’s vaccine mandate deadline, saying it did not give officers “enough time to make a retirement decision.”

His request for an investigation into vaccine injuries did not mention 44-year-old New York fireman Lieutenant Robert B. Cruz, who “succumbed to a medical episode” on February 17 and is survived by his wife and two children, according to a [post](#) on the FDNY Family Assistance Unit’s Facebook page. Also missing from the list was 60-year-old New York firefighter Lieutenant Thomas Keery, who died on December 28, also due to a “medical episode” per a [post](#) on the NYC Fire Wire Facebook page. One of the post’s comments reads: “I can think of two others off the top of my head in other parts of NYS [New York State]. Asst Chief Steinberg — Forestberg, NY, FF Morse — Watertown, NY, Both cardiac events — one in his mid 30s after performing exterior ops at a routine fire and the other in his early 20s while in the mask confidence course.”

Gerhard and Cruz passed away just days after New York fired nearly 1,500 municipal workers, including 25 firefighters and 36 policemen, for refusing the COVID job. Mayor Bill de Blasio forced all city employees to get two shots by February 11 or lose their jobs. ABC News [reported](#) the firings represent less than one percent of the city’s workforce.