

Office of Worker Screening and Compensation Support

HSS
Issue 10

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WORKERS' SPOTLIGHT

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Greg Lewis

I had the pleasure of attending and presenting at the recent Joint Outreach Task Group (JOTG) meetings in Livermore and Berkeley, California. Representatives from the Department of Labor (DOL), the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the DOL Ombudsman, and the Worker Health Protection Program (part of the Department of Energy's Former Worker Medical Screening Program (FWP) each gave presentations as well. Both meetings were well attended, and there were



plenty of questions for each of the presenters.

This year the FWP surpassed **100,000** total screenings, dating back to the establishment

of the program. This would not have been possible without a constant focus on outreach. Events like the Livermore and Berkeley meetings are extremely important to the program and a major tool for outreach, but this newsletter is an important tool as well. Many of the members of the worker community who receive this newsletter are in contact with other former workers, and with e-mail and other social media tools, people

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NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS WORKERS

For the 5th consecutive year, the United States Congress passed a resolution designating October 30th as the National Day of Remembrance for Nuclear Weapons Workers, and on October 25, 2013, current and former workers and their friends and families came together at the National Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada, to celebrate the occasion.

There were a number of distinguished speakers at the event, including The Honorable Carolyn Goodman, Mayor of Las Vegas; The Honorable Dina Titus, US House of Representatives; and Mr. Glenn Podonsky, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Chief Health, Safety and Security Officer. In addition, this year there was a special focus on some of the unique historical aspects of the Nuclear Weapons Complex.

Mr. Ray Smith, the historian from the Y-12 National Security Site in Oak Ridge, TN, spoke about the significant contribution of the Y-12 workers during the Manhattan Project. He also spoke of the women who were responsible for operating the calutrons that produced the uranium for the first atomic bomb.

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Al Tseu, former US Paratrooper, speaks with visitors to the National Atomic Testing Museum celebrating the National Day of Remembrance



Congresswoman Titus addresses the attendees

GETTING TO KNOW FWP STAFF



Sandie Medina has spent over 40 years committed to the workers of the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS, formerly the Nevada Test Site). Since 1996, Sandie has been an integral part of the Former Worker Medical Screening Program (FWP) at NNSS, now operated by the Worker Health Protection Program at Queens College of the City University of New York, where she works as a Program Specialist. Sandie spends much of her time in the field recruiting former workers and ensuring they are aware of the FWP and Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program services, as well as conducting occupational health interviews and coordinating medical testing for participants.

Prior to working on the medical screening program, Sandie had a 25-year career at the NNSS, where she provided clerical and administrative support for underground nuclear testing. In this role, Sandie was able to work with large segments of the NNSA workforce and developed many close ties with the workers who carried out these crucial tests of the United States' nuclear arsenal.

"My favorite part of working on the medical screening program is being able to interact one-on-one with my former coworkers. Just knowing how many of us were put in harm's way, I feel I am truly lucky to help workers get screened for the early detection of occupational illness, or in other cases, assist workers who are already ill and are trying to get compensation."

Sandie grew up in nearby New Mexico and attended New Mexico Highlands University where she studied Elementary Education and Child Psychology, but changed her career focus when she had the opportunity to work at the NNSS. Sandie has been an active member of Laborers' Union Local #872 since 1998 and the Administrative Secretary for the Laborers' Retiree's Council since 2006.

When not working, Sandie is a sports enthusiast and enjoys watching the Los Angeles Lakers, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Dallas Cowboys. Sandie is also an active member in many civic organizations and is the Acting Secretary for the Southern Nevada Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Nevada Alliance of Retired Americans, Las Vegas Chapter. ■

BERYLLIUM, BERYLLIUM SENSITIZATION, AND CHRONIC BERYLLIUM DISEASE

By Bill Stange, PhD, Former Worker Program Coordinator

Because of its properties, beryllium has been part of the atomic energy and nuclear weapons industries since the 1940s. Beryllium is a naturally occurring metal and is not radioactive. Beryllium and beryllium alloys have become an increasingly important material for a wide range of commercial products and governmental applications. Exposure to beryllium and certain beryllium compounds can result in beryllium sensitization, which may develop into a lung disease called chronic beryllium disease (CBD). Beryllium sensitization is an 'allergic' condition resulting from exposure to beryllium that may develop after a person breathes air containing beryllium. Even brief or small exposures to beryllium can lead to sensitization and/or CBD.

Most people exposed to beryllium will NOT become sensitized or develop CBD. Some people have a higher risk of sensitization and CBD due to genetics.

Medical screening for beryllium sensitization and CBD usually begins with a beryllium lymphocyte proliferation test (BeLPT). The BeLPT is a laboratory blood test that examines how a type of disease-fighting blood cells normally found in the body, called lymphocytes, react to beryllium. In general terms, the BeLPT is performed by culturing lymphocytes from peripheral blood in the presence of beryllium. If these lymphocytes react to the beryllium through excessive growth, the test results are 'abnormal'. Current and former Department of Energy workers with an abnormal BeLPT are encouraged to file a claim for benefits with the Department of Labor Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program. If the cultured lymphocytes do not react to beryllium, the test is 'normal'.

An abnormal BeLPT result indicates that the immune system has responded to beryllium, and the individual being tested may be sensitized to beryllium. A single abnormal BeLPT result should be confirmed through

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TRIVIA QUESTION

Who was largely responsible for the establishment of the national Thanksgiving Holiday and what is *she* best known for?

DIRECTORS NOTE *cont.*

are more connected than ever, even if they leave the area in which they worked. I would encourage you to take a look at the calendar section of our newsletter and consider attending events in your area, or passing the information along to former workers who may not receive our newsletter. There are over 20 events listed on the calendar so even though it's the holiday season, there's still plenty going on.

If you would like us to include your event in a future newsletter or if you have received this from another former worker and would like to be included on the mailing list, please send an e-mail to our Outreach Coordinator, Moriah Ferullo, at Moriah.Ferullo@hq.doe.gov. ■

REMEMBRANCE *cont.*

Mr. Al Tseu also addressed the crowd and described his experiences as a U.S. Army paratrooper, including parachuting into an above ground nuclear test.

The event closed with a specially prepared video produced by the DOE Office of Health, Safety and Security (HSS) to honor the workers' accomplishments.

Over 200 individuals attended the celebration. The event was sponsored by the DOE HSS, The National Atomic Testing Museum, the Worker Health Protection Program and the Cold War Patriots. ■



Chief Health, Safety and Security Officer, Glenn Podonsky, and Sandie Medina at the NDR Celebration



A captive audience of over 200 attendees for the NDR Celebration

BERYLLIUM *cont.*

additional BeLPTs. Beryllium sensitization is diagnosed based on abnormal BeLPT results, and CBD is diagnosed based on the results of the BeLPT and other specific tests and procedures.

Depending on numerous factors, including the frequency and amount of beryllium exposure and the type of exposure (beryllium metal, metal oxides, salts), 2 to 6% of beryllium-exposed people may develop beryllium sensitization and/or CBD. However, certain work tasks with direct exposure, such as machining and welding, have been associated with beryllium sensitization rates as high as 20%. Even very small amounts of exposure to beryllium can cause sensitization and CBD in some people. Individuals remain at risk of developing beryllium sensitization and CBD after exposure to beryllium has stopped, even if a normal BeLPT result was identified. Therefore, retesting for beryllium sensitization is recommended approximately every three years, unless unexplained pulmonary symptoms develop, which would suggest that immediate retesting is necessary. Serial retesting using the BeLPT is recommended, even if no additional opportunity for beryllium exposure has occurred.

If beryllium sensitization is identified, physicians who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of CBD should be consulted with regard to a diagnosis of beryllium sensitization and/or CBD. Specialized treatment can be effective in controlling CBD; however, a complete cure is rare. People with CBD can have complications from the disease or from the treatment for the disease. Early and accurate diagnosis of CBD and related conditions is important in providing an effective treatment. Individuals who are sensitized to beryllium, but do not yet have the disease, do not need treatment. Beryllium may cause cancer in humans. ■



One-Year Anniversary of Secure Electronic Records Transfer (SERT) System.

October 15, 2013, marked the one-year anniversary of the SERT System. SERT provides over 400 users from the Departments of Energy (DOE) and Labor (DOL), and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) with the ability to securely and efficiently exchange records and information in support of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA). In addition to effectively securing large volumes of Personally Identifiable Information, the system has helped to reduce the time to complete EEOICPA claims and improved transparency between DOE, DOL and NIOSH.

As the host of the SERT system, the Office of Health, Safety and Security is proud of the positive impact SERT has had on the EEOICPA. As of October 15th, DOL has made over 15,260 requests for the 5419 individual's claim in the SERT system; DOE has responded to 13,640 of those requests.

SERT has greatly improved the overall DOE response time, which ultimately serves the current and former DOE workers, by reducing the timeframe for the claims process. ■

Commemorating DOE Former Workers

By Laurence Fuortes and Jill Welch, University of Iowa Former Worker Program



Dr. Laurence Fuortes,
Principal Investigator, Iowa
FWP

The University of Iowa College of Public Health has been administering medical screenings to former workers from the Burlington AEC Plant (BAECP) at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in West Burlington, Iowa, since 2002 and to the former workers from the Ames Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, since 2006.

Over 3,000 former workers from these two Department of Energy (DOE) sites have received a medical screening. We have had the privilege to meet these former workers and their families and learn their personal stories and struggles with their health, as well as assisting them with the Department of Labor (DOL)-administered programs.

In 2007, we hosted a gathering of BAECP former workers as a gesture of gratitude and recognition for their work and service to the country and provided lunch, similar to a union picnic. The event turned out to be a great success with the workers, who were excited to see colleagues they worked side-by-side with during their careers and had often not seen in decades—a reunion atmosphere was evident. Since then, we have held annual commemoration events in the fall for both the BAECP and Ames Laboratory, and the former workers have begun to ask us at their screenings in the late winter when the next picnic will be held.

During these events, former workers receive informational materials on the Former Worker Medical Screening Program (FWP) and the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICP), as well as enroll for the medical screenings. New participants are identified and recruited, and information is shared back and forth between the former workers and FWP staff. Where possible, historical photos from the site have covered the walls, and



DOL Ombudsman for EEOICP,
Malcolm Nelson

former workers have started to bring their own photos and documents to pin on the walls. In recent years, we have been fortunate to have DOL's Denver Resource Center and Office of the Ombudsman for EEOICP



Ames Lab Former Workers

attend in order to assist former workers and family members with claims. When possible, the DOE-FWP national office, Ames Laboratory's Health and Safety Office, representatives from the U.S. Senate, local Congressional offices, and local media have also had the opportunity to participate.

The attendance at these events continues to increase every year. In September 2013, over 200 BAECP former workers attended an event held at the Memorial Auditorium on the banks of the Mississippi River, and over 100 Ames Laboratory attended an event held at the botanical gardens on the campus of Iowa State University. At this year's events, a presentation on the DOL medical benefits identification card and home health care services was given by DOL's Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation (DEEOIC). Many former workers were very appreciative to receive further clarification on these issues and the personal contact with the DEEOIC.

Due to the former workers' enthusiasm for this type of outreach event, the annual picnics will continue as well as our ongoing commitment to recognize and honor DOE former workers.



BAECP Former Worker Medical Benefits Presentation

Calendar of Events



November

5	8:00 am	FWP Event Mound Retiree Breakfast Golden Coral, 8870 Kingsridge Drive, Miamisburg, OH
	9:00 am	Local Event Y-12 Retiree Meeting Shoney's, 204 S Illinois Avenue, Oak Ridge, TN
6	7:15 am	Local Event X-10 Retiree Meeting Shoney's, 8529 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN
	9:00 am	Local Event Y-12 Inspector Group Meeting Shoney's, 1100 US 321, Lenoir City, TN
	11:00 am	Local Event Y-12 Guards Meeting Shoney's, 1100 US 321, Lenoir City, TN
	4:30 pm	FWP Event X-10/Y-12 ATLC Council Meeting ATLC Union Hall, 109 Viking Road, Oak Ridge, TN
7	9:00 am	Local Event X-10/Y-12 Asbestos Retiree Meeting Shoney's, 3739 West US Highway 9, Lake City, TN
	6:00 pm	FWP Event K-25 AGRE Meeting USW Union Hall, 133 Raleigh Road, Oak Ridge, TN
14	11:00 am	Local Event X-10 Guards Meeting Shoney's, 1100 US 321, Lenoir City, TN
19	12:00 pm	Local Event X-10/Y-12 Machinists Local 480 Retiree Meeting Local 480 Hall, Oak Ridge, TN
	5:00 pm	Local Event Y-12 Gage Lab Gondolier, 729 Briarcliff Ave, Oak Ridge, TN
21	11:30 pm	FWP Event Mound Retiree Luncheon Golden Coral, 8870 Kingsridge Drive, Miamisburg, OH

December

3	8:00 am	FWP Event Mound Retiree Breakfast Golden Coral, 8870 Kingsridge Drive, Miamisburg, OH
	9:00 am	Local Event Y-12 Retiree Meeting Shoney's, 204 S Illinois Avenue, Oak Ridge, TN
4	7:15 am	Local Event X-10 Retiree Meeting Shoney's, 8529 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN
	9:00 am	Local Event Y-12 Inspector Group Meeting Shoney's, 1100 US 321, Lenoir City, TN

December cont.

4	11:00 am	Local Event Y-12 Guards Meeting Shoney's, 1100 US 321, Lenoir City, TN
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For a complete list of calendar events, visit:

http://www.hss.doe.gov/healthsafety/FWSP/Formerworkermed/events_calendars.html

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Trivia Answer: Sarah Josepha Hale, one of the great women in American History and author of "*Mary Had a Little Lamb*," campaigned for nearly 20 years to get Thanksgiving made a national holiday. During her campaign, which spanned five US presidents before she found one that was open to her idea in Abraham Lincoln, she continually lobbied various congressmen; wrote annual editorials on the subject; wrote annual letters to every governor in the US; and sent a steady stream of letters to the US President of the day as well. Ultimately, she was able to convince President Lincoln that it would be a good idea to help unify the country once the Civil War ended. Thanksgiving was celebrated as a national holiday for the first time in 1863.