

ENERGY EMPLOYEES OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS COMPENSATION PROGRAM ACT OF 2000

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- After 600,000 nuclear weapons workers were evaluated, it was discovered that more than 100,000 of them were exposed to radiation.
- An undetermined number of nuclear weapons workers has been exposed to beryllium.
- Silica exposure to workers conducting weapons testing in underground mines has resulted in silicosis.
- Members of this workforce also have been exposed to other hazardous chemicals.
- More than 300 Department of Energy (DOE) sites located in 30 states have independent and differing compensation programs. Nuclear weapons workers have limited and varying access to compensation for wage losses and medical expenses arising from work-related illness.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

The *Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000* establishes a compensation program for DOE workers and contractors who become ill as a result of exposure to beryllium, silica, or radiation in the course of their work. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through CDC, is responsible under the act for developing guidelines to determine if a worker's cancer was likely to have been caused by occupational exposure to radiation; establishing radiation-dose estimation methods; estimating radiation doses of individual cancer claimants; considering the addition of employee groups to a "Special Exposure Cohort;" and administering and staffing a federal Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health.

In May 2002, CDC developed final rules on dose reconstruction and probability of causation under the act, incorporating review by the public, scientific experts, and the independent Advisory Board. These regulations establish CDC methods to estimate radiation doses and enable the U.S. Department of Labor to evaluate cancer causation based on these dose estimates. In 2003, CDC initiated 5,000 dose reconstructions and completed more than 1,500 of them. CDC completed site profiles for many leading nuclear weapons sites, collecting and analyzing extensive information on radiation exposures and monitoring at the sites to facilitate the completion of a high volume of dose reconstructions in 2004. CDC also revised and obtained public comment on proposed procedures for adding groups of workers to the Special Exposure Cohort.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will expand its radiation dose reconstruction program to meet an unprecedented level of demand, develop final regulations for considering additions to the Special Exposure Cohort, and assist the Secretary of HHS and the Advisory Board in considering Special Exposure Cohort petitions.