National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
SEC Worker Outreach Meeting for General Electric

Meeting Date: Monday, May 10, 2010, 12:30 p.m.

Meeting with: United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 647 Retirees Group, Evendale, Ohio

NIOSH Team:

Peter Darnell, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Division of Compensation Analysis and Support (DCAS), Health Physicist

Matt McFee, Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU), Health Physicist

Mike Kubiak, ORAU, Health Physicist

Vernon McDougall, Advanced Technologies and Laboratories International, Inc. (ATL), Outreach Project Manager

Mark Lewis, ATL, Senior Outreach Specialist

Mary Elliott, ATL, Technical Writer/Editor

Other Attendees:

[Name redacted], UAW Local 647

[Name redacted], UAW Region 2-B

Proceedings:

The NIOSH Team was invited as guests to the regular meeting of the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 647 Retirees Group. Following the regular business portion of the meeting, UAW Local 647 [name redacted] explained to the attendees that he had been contacted by [name redacted] of the UAW International Union's Health and Safety Department, who suggested that he speak with experts working on a federal program that could affect former workers at the GE plant who may have worked with uranium and thorium in the 1960s. [Name redacted] stated that after he had researched the program, he spoke with Vernon McDougall, a contractor for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). He asked the attendees to help get the information out to their former coworkers who could not attend the meeting. He introduced Mr. McDougall of ATL to approximately 40 members of the local union's retiree group.

Mr. McDougall briefly described his background in occupational safety and health and with unions. He explained that he now works as a contractor for NIOSH on the dose reconstruction project for the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA or "the Act"). He introduced the other members of the NIOSH Team: Peter Darnell of NIOSH; Matt McFee and Mike Kubiak of the ORAU Team, also a contractor to NIOSH; and Mark Lewis

and Mary Elliott of ATL. Mr. McDougall explained that Ms. Elliott was present to take notes and record the meeting for the purpose of preparing minutes of the meeting.

Mr. McDougall briefly explained the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA or "the Act"). He stated that the workers from the GE facility who performed contract work on a project for the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) between 1961 and 1970 and who subsequently developed cancer are eligible to file claims with the U. S. Department of Labor (DOL). After DOL verifies the claim, NIOSH performs dose reconstructions to determine whether the claim will be compensated.

Mr. McDougall stated that NIOSH had initiated a petition for a class of workers from the General Electric (GE) Plant to be added to the Special Exposure Cohort (SEC) because there is not enough information to calculate the radiation doses of the workers. He explained that NIOSH had requested this meeting to obtain input from former workers to help NIOSH answer questions from the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health (ABRWH, or "the Board") regarding the petition. When he asked the retirees to indicate who had worked at General Electric during the contract period, approximately 90% of the attendees raised their hands.

Mr. Lewis circulated sign-in sheets to the attendees. Ms. Elliott explained that the information provided by the attendees on the sheets is protected by the Privacy Act and would only be used if NIOSH needed to contact them for additional information.

Mr. McDougall introduced Peter Darnell of NIOSH. Mr. Darnell described the EEOICPA filing process. He explained that NIOSH has documentation for two nuclear projects at the GE Plant during the 1950s and 1960s. During the project in the 1960s, workers at the plant handled uranium, thorium, and other radioactive materials in Buildings C and D at Air Force Plant 36. Some of the questions raised by the Board include:

- Which employees worked in the buildings?
- What type of work was performed?
- Did these workers wear dosimetry badges?
- Did they participate in bioassay programs?
- Were radioactive materials kept in storage areas outside these buildings?
- Were they aware of any contamination issues during that time?
- Were there security measures in place at these buildings?

Former worker:
I started in 1952. I worked for 10 years as a welder in Building C. I'm not sick, though.

Former worker
I worked in the 1960s and I had cancer.

Mr. Darnell:
You can certainly file a claim with the DOL. They will decide if your illness is covered. There is no charge to file a claim.

Former worker:
Are the members of UAW Local 647 filing a class action lawsuit to represent those employees? Many of the employees who worked in the 1960s got cancer. I worked in the radiation for 15 years. GE told us that there wasn't any harm, and that it was no more dangerous than the stuff that they put on watches to make them glow in the dark. GE put chips in 55-gallon drums and dumped them in the ocean. I don't have cancer.

Former worker:
Is the compensation all inclusive (referring to the NIOSH Fact Sheet: Special Exposure Cohort)?

Mr. Darnell:
All cancers are eligible for compensation under EEOICPA, but only 22 specific cancers are eligible for compensation under the SEC. If Congress approves the addition of the GE class to the SEC, claims for eligible class members will be paid automatically. If the worker is not an eligible member of the SEC class, the claim must undergo dose reconstruction. The SEC petition for the GE site qualified for evaluation because NIOSH cannot do dose reconstructions. If a worker qualifies for the SEC time period but has a non-eligible cancer, then the claim will have a partial dose reconstruction.

Former worker:
Does NIOSH factor in personal habits such as smoking during dose reconstruction?

Mr. Darnell:
The probability of causation (POC) is affected by factors such as age at first exposure, ethnicity, gender, and other things. Smoking is only a consideration in dose reconstructions for lung cancers.

Former worker:
Does the company shoulder the liability for compensation?

Mr. Darnell:
The federal government pays the compensation, not the company.

Former worker:
I worked with thorium and other hazardous materials in my daily duties as a welder. I got very sick after we brazed thorium, but I did not get cancer. Are other illnesses compensated (under EEOICPA)?

Mr. Darnell:
EEOICPA Part E compensates for occupational illnesses related to exposure to toxic chemicals, while Part B deals with compensation for cancer caused by radiation exposure, beryllium disease, and silicosis. You can contact the DOL Resource Center with your questions about Part E.

Former worker:
I was a forklift operator and I was exposed to these materials. Can I file a claim?

Mr. Darnell:
Any eligible employee can file a claim regardless of job description.

Former worker:
There was a keypad at a security fence inside Building C, as well as security guards. Workers entering the area were required to wear a special badge and sign in.

Former worker:
I operated a press in Building C when I began working for GE. Later on, I went to work in the Lab. I had to have a clearance after my work on the presses.

Former worker:
Maintenance workers went into the radiological areas every day.

Mr. Darnell:
Did you have to wear protective clothing in Buildings C and D?

Former worker:
Workers in the 500 Building wore protective clothing every day.

Former worker:
I did not wear protective clothing in Building C in the mid-1960s. A person could walk into that area at any time.

Former worker:
I worked in Building 700 in Heat Treatment in 1966. Each furnace had a vacuum system that had a tube that contained 100 milligrams of radiation. I kept asking them, "What if these things leak?" I kept on them from the 1960s through the early 1980s. When they came in with a Geiger counter, they found out that those tubes had been leaking. We were exposed every minute.

Mr. Darnell:
This is very good information because we did not have all of this information.

Former worker:
I had a friend who worked in Building C where they had radiation poles. He has passed away. Should I tell his wife about the program?

Mr. Darnell:
Yes. Survivors of eligible employees can file for compensation under EEOICPA as long as the illness is covered.

Former worker:
We had to wear our identification badges in Building 700.

Mr. Kubiak:
They had access controls to the buildings.

Former worker:
On the job that I worked on about 90% of the people I worked with had cancer. I have had colon cancer.

Mr. Darnell concluded the main portion of the meeting at approximately 1:15 p.m.

Following the general meeting, Mr. Darnell, Mr. McFee, and Mr. Kubiak interviewed individual retired employees who had worked at the plant during the AEC contract period.

Materials Distributed During the Meeting:

- NIOSH Fact Sheet: Dose Reconstruction
- NIOSH Fact Sheet: Probability of Causation
- NIOSH Fact Sheet: Technical Documents Used During Dose Reconstruction
- Contact Information for DOL Resource Center, Portsmouth, Ohio (printout from DEEOIC Web site)