

**NIOSH Dose Reconstruction Project**  
**Meeting on Hanford Site Profile with:**  
Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council, AFL-CIO (HAMTC)  
Richland, Washington  
January 13, 2004

Attendees: 27 of which 18 signed the sign-in sheet

HAMTC President Jim Bateman welcomed the NIOSH/ORAU team. Bill Murray, ORAU, made introductions and thanked everyone for coming.

Larry Elliot, NIOSH OCAS, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. This is an important opportunity to talk with the union representatives. NIOSH now has a Site Profile for Hanford. Neutron exposure was a problem in the external dose Technical Basis Document (TBD) but now the problem has been resolved and that TBD has been approved. We now have information that will provide a consistent dose reconstruction process. The Site Profile is a living document that may grow and change. We need the unions' help to improve it. You can tell us how things worked here. We want your thoughts – questions – concerns. We're here today to answer your questions and address your concerns.

Dick Toohey, ORAU, offered introductory comments and introduced Ed Scalsky and Bill Murray of the ORAU team. The team wants to know what we might have missed.

Larry Elliott introduced the NIOSH team: Jim Neton, Stu Hinnefeld, and Tim Taulbee; and the Department of Labor representative, Joan Morgan.

Handouts shared with those in attendance were a summary of the Hanford Site Profile and a copy of the slide presentation.

Additional introductions were made by going around the room. (For attendees see sign-in sheet.)

Bill Murray presented the slide presentation. Bill explained how dose reconstruction is done. He talked about the first meeting with the Building Trades at the Savannah River Site and said this is the second such meeting. The Hanford Site Profile is a 250 page document written by subject matter experts. The Profile is very important to the dose reconstruction process.

**Question:** How many claims have there been?

**Answer:** About 1650 claims have been received from Hanford. Of these, about 30 are complete, with about 50% approved. Some are in the review process.

**Question:** About the web page and what to provide-- Some people worked at many facilities.

**Answer:** There is an uncertainty factor for Hanford. We need to know where, when, and what workers were exposed to. The website provides documents for review. It's an excellent guide, a good place to look. Sometimes there is a maximizing number given. When one can't be certain, decisions go in favor of the claimant. Uncertainties can favor the claimant.

**Question:** How is a claim filed?

**Answer:** Contact the resource center in Kennewick. Download the forms on line – or call the Seattle office of the Department of Labor.

**Question:** Was the Plutonium Finishing Plant taken into account?

**Answer:** Yes, all facilities were covered.

**Question:** How many claims were successful?

**Answer:** Of the 30 that have been completed, about half were denied. –But this is preliminary, it could change.

**Question:** How can they be denied if it is uncertain?

**Answer:** There is an uncertainty associated with the dose that is reconstructed. The uncertainty results from a number of factors, such as errors in measuring the dose, doses recorded as zero, or a lack of any dose recorded. That uncertainty is expressed as a confidence limit (99%) on the dose. Thus, we say we are 99% confident that the worker's dose is within a given range of values. This range can be very broad.

To decide if the worker's cancer is related to radiation dose, we have to use the Interactive RadioEpidemiologic Program (IREP). This computer program is used to determine if the worker's dose is related to the radiation exposure. We enter the dose using the high end of the 99% confidence limit to account for the uncertainty. The IREP makes a calculation of how probable it is that this cancer is related to radiation exposure. If the probability is greater than 50% at this dose, the claim will be awarded. The benefit of the doubt goes to claimants.

This is a claimant-favorable process. This prevents denying compensation to deserving claimants; however, some who are undeserving will also receive compensation. Of the thirty completed dose reconstructions at Hanford, 15 were compensated. The reason it has taken so long is because of the time it took to develop the Site Profile. The Site Profile will help accelerate the process.

**Comment:** A worker has had two surgeries. He had tumors that were not malignant, so they don't qualify for this program. I know you didn't develop this, but it upsets me.

**Reply:** Non-malignant tumors are not eligible for this program. The person could apply under Subtitle D for workers' compensation for precancerous conditions.

**Question:** You were at the Red Lion last year. Are you coming again?

**Answer:** That's not in our planning right now. Last year we covered the country talking with people about how to add classes of workers to the Special Exposure Cohorts. We need to come back out to inform folks.

**Joan Morgan, Dept. of Labor:** The Office of Worker Advocacy outreach office in Kennewick might help.

**Question:** Are any facilities being looked at for special exposure cohort facility status? Perhaps we should be in special cohort. We need to look at ways to accept petitions for construction trades.

**Jeskey:** I'm concerned that we 18 – 40 year olds may develop cancer in the future. Would we qualify?

**Answer:** The law covers the current workforce doing cleanup. Congress would have to pass a law to change.

**Jeskey:** Before good readings were kept, a lot of people were exposed due to fooling with exposure to get overtime. People needed exposure time to make the money they wanted. In the 80s, the Navy came in and things improved, but many people are gone.

**Reply:** We add in dose that was missed based on our interviews of workers or survivors. We make sure we get this kind of information. We have interviewers who are cleared to talk to workers about National Security information, if that would help.

**Jeskey:** Health Physics Technicians (HPTs) got burned out every year. Now my dose is down to a lower level. I don't know how that could happen.

**Reply:** We don't accept anything but badge dose (the actual dosimeter reading of the worker's dose. We do not reconstruct the worker's dos from annual summaries or a cumulative dose record.

**Becky:** My grandfather died of colon cancer. We can't really read the documents that you have provided to us.

**Reply:** We look at everything and ask for better copies if we can't read them. We are given better copies.

**Question:** Do you get records and other information under the Freedom of Information Act?

**Answer:** Yes, we can get information and records under this act.

**Question:** What about construction workers who worked in the private reactors?

**Answer:** The doses received at commercial reactor facilities aren't covered. Only DOE facilities are covered.

**Question:** What if I file a claim after 5 years at Hanford?

**Answer:** We would look at the dose you got there.

**Randy Knowles:** It's a political monster regarding people exposed at other facilities. Contact your Congressmen to get working on it. These (federal agencies) are kingdoms – Department of Energy or Department of Labor. We'd like the DOL to administer the whole program.

**Question:** For the Building Trades – does radiography play a part?

**Answer:** (Toohey) Yes, we've done process workers in the past. We will do documentation for special conditions for Building Trades. This will take longer.

**Larry Elliott:** If you can help us with copies of records showing how, when, and where radiography was used, this would be a big help.

**Question:** Does the program include chemical exposures?

**Answer:** They are not covered under this part of the EEOICPA, except for beryllium and silica. In order to get help with other exposures, you should go to the Subtitle D program.

**Jeskey:** We were always going in to see what the dose was in order to know if other workers could enter.

**Larry Elliott:** Chemical exposures were not tracked until the 1980s.

**Larry Elliott:** We'll mail you a hard copy of the complete profile. Hanford hasn't had as many claims as other sites. People need to be aware.

**Liz:** I think it is because we have a sense of patriotism. We also knew what the dangers were when we went in. I don't think it's a cowboy mentality.

**Joan Morgan (DOL):** Next month there will be an outreach with the Dept. of Labor to try to get the word out.

**Larry Elliott:** The profile was the hurdle. We will now be moving through the claims more quickly. When the switch was first turned on, claims were coming, and we had no place to work. Now we are finishing more than we receive in a month. For mature

organizations, 18 months is the average time from filing to decision on a compensation claim.

**Joan Morgan:** Time periods to expect: two weeks between the time we get the claim and it goes to the dose reconstructors. Then, there are 60 days at the end to come up with more information to support the claim. This is in addition to the time needed by the dose reconstructor. I hope you will relay this to others. Ask NIOSH what is holding up a claim when it has been too long. 1-800-35NIOSH is the number for the claimant. They are given the number.

Previous claims were looked at with an older version of the site profile. Those claims will need to be reevaluated if it is determined that changes in the site profile could have affected the claim. The DOL will notify the claimant if the claim is being reevaluated. We work the oldest claims first. If we run into a wall, we have to wait for whatever is missing.

Bill Murray offered to write something up for the HAMTC newsletter to explain why profiles and claims take a while. This system is just about mature, so time to decision should be more consistent in the future.

Bill Murray thanked all for coming. The meeting stood adjourned.

#### Attachments

Sign-in sheet

Presentation by Bill Murray, ORAU

Summary of the Hanford Site Profile