



NIOSH Dose Reconstruction Project Meeting On Weldon Spring Profile

Date:

February 2, 2005

Meeting with:

United Nuclear Weapons Workers (UNWW)

Attendees:

Approximately 30 people were in attendance, including retired plant workers and worker advocates. Of those, the following chose to sign in as the sheets circulated:

Denise Brock	Director, UNWW - St. Louis Region
Evelyn Coffelb	Retiree
Joseph and Leanne Fiaziee	Retirees
Janet Manning	Retiree
Don Kampschroder	Retiree
Mark Browning	UNWW
Robert Fulkerson	Retiree
Charles L. Roth	Retiree
Joseph A. Freigurger	Subcontractor employee
John Bognan	Retiree
Anthony Windisch	Retiree
Ralph and Freda Hunter	Retiree
Brian Zink	Dalton, Coyne, Cindilt, Hillemann
Vic Amantea	Retiree

NIOSH and ORAU Team Representatives:

Tom Tomes – National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Office of Compensation Analysis and Support (OCAS)

William Murray – Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU)

Mark Lewis – Advanced Technologies Laboratories International Inc. (ATL)

Dawn Catalano – ATL

Proceedings

Mr. Lewis opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending, and thanked Denise Brock for her help in arranging the meeting. He said that the Outreach Team came to talk about the Site Profile for the Weldon Spring plant -- the former workers are the real experts, the ones who needed to add their experiences. He explained that the Site Profile is a tool used to reconstruct radiation dose for compensation claims, and stressed the importance of the workers providing any information they could share about the operations of the plant to guarantee the development of an accurate Site Profile. He stated that to avoid conflict of interest, the authors of the Site Profile have no connection to the site. Contractors and government agencies operating the facilities provide information for the Site Profiles, but NIOSH and ORAU want the worker's perspective to be represented in the final document.



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Mr. Lewis said that he had worked at the Portsmouth DOE site for about 30 years and had some radiation exposure himself. He knows how the system works and has empathy for the workers' side. His role is that of liaison between labor and the government to get the most complete picture of what happened on site. The team is here to listen to what the workers have to say, and will appreciate any information on leads or documentation they could provide regarding radiation exposure. He then introduced Mr. Tom Tomes from NIOSH for opening comments.

Mr. Tomes said that he works as a health physicist with NIOSH, and has been assigned to work on the Site Profile for Weldon Spring. In order to characterize the site, he has been researching personnel records and site operations documentation and analyzing data that might help recreate dose received by workers. Mr. Tomes took several questions at that time (see Discussion Session), and then turned the meeting over to Mr. Murray for the presentation.

Comment:

I worked for Mallinckrodt for 20 years at Weldon Spring and Destrehan Street. They have the information, they're holding it back – they don't want to give it to us. When former President Bill Clinton signed that bill (*referring to Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000*) for atomic workers, the government admitted that it took responsibility for causing the death and illness of thousands of workers from processing uranium.

I don't agree that the program should only name 22 types of cancer. It has been proven that many illnesses are caused by radiation exposure. As far back as 1910, scientists proved that radiation caused skin cancer. Claimants from Bethlehem Steel were compensated for skin cancer and prostate cancer, but we were not. The decisions are inconsistent. The government caused deaths by hiding the truth.

I worked as a millwright and assistant foreman at Weldon Springs and worked in every building on the site. Workers were exposed to every type of radiation, and never even knew. If we had known we were working with dangerous materials we would have had a choice to accept or reject employment. Our lives were put in jeopardy.

Mark Lewis:

That's why it's important to get this information in the Site Profile, to help with a more accurate dose reconstruction. Any sources you can point us to would be helpful.

Comment:

Records about radioactive materials were kept at Weldon Spring between 1962 and 1967 and were maintained on the computer. I worked in the computer department, and I wrote the programs that accumulated all the radiation (records) for all the workers there. At that time, they were upgrading a big 4K computer to a new 1205 IBM random access computer, and I was assigned to write the program that would log this by individual. When an individual received an overexposure, a report letter was automatically sent to both the supervisor and the individual. Now the records can't be found anywhere.



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Mark Lewis:

This is the kind of information that will help NIOSH and ORAU develop an accurate Site Profile. That's why your collective memory is so important. In a small group activity, you can recollect some of your memories of working at the plant, and possibly help each other recall some events that you may have forgotten.

Comment:

We worked in our street clothes, and weren't required to shower. Then we got in our cars and drove home. It's hard to tell how much (*referring to radiation*) we took home with us.

Mark Lewis:

The mindset was different at the time the work was being done. Everything was on a "need to know" basis, and that policy was not questioned. Now we have the "right to know." If current concerns about classified information are holding you back, NIOSH and ORAU can arrange a secure interview. You are members of the greatest generation. We need to document the important work you did in the Site Profile.

Comment:

People worry that the records have been altered.

Mark Lewis:

That's why it's important for you to tell us what you remember. Changes in the Site Profile can affect dose reconstructions; your input is important to ensure that the document is accurate.

Denise Brock:

The reason everyone was invited to attend is because of your expertise and institutional knowledge. Mr. Murray's presentation will clarify how the Site Profile is so important in dose reconstruction. Your input regarding what you were exposed to or involved with is important because only you can tell if that exposure is missing. We have applied for Special Exposure Cohort (SEC) status, but at this point the best we can do is document what we know.

I also have documented proof that your records have been altered. I don't think that this is as important as the fact that you have the information we need to put into the Site Profile... tell us what you know.

Mr. Murray thanked the attendees for their willingness to share their experiences. He said that the meeting would be primarily focused on the Weldon Spring plant, but if anyone worked at the Mallinckrodt Chemical Company, NIOSH and ORAU would be interested in that information as well. Mr. Murray also mentioned that the Advisory Board that oversees NIOSH and ORAU's administration of the program would be having a public meeting in St. Louis the following week, and he could provide more details about that if anyone thought they might want to attend.

Mr. Murray explained that a team of health physicists would be going over available records to find as much information as possible for the Site Profile. He said that Bob Meyer, the Site Profile Team Leader, had made several visits to the site and would return to gather more data. He explained that there are two types of claims under the Energy Employees Occupational



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Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA). The section NIOSH and ORAU work on is Subtitle B, which covers radiation-induced cancers as well as beryllium and silicosis claims. Mr. Murray stated that the award for a claim filed under Subtitle B consists of \$150,000 cash compensation and medical coverage. He stated that NIOSH and ORAU only handle dose reconstruction for the radiation claims.

Mr. Murray explained that the process of dose reconstruction has 4 components – internal, external, environmental, and medical doses. NIOSH and ORAU are in the process of gathering technical information to place in the Site Profile in these areas. For the external dose, the team considers types of radiation present, types of badges, and other aspects of the monitoring process such as the sensitivity of the equipment and frequency of exchanges. The same sorts of things are considered for the internal dose. In both cases, DOE has provided the records, but NIOSH and ORAU understand that the workers may have additional information that would be helpful to produce a more accurate and complete document.

In addition to the information contained in the workers' official DOE records, NIOSH and ORAU also consider environmental and medical doses. Mr. Murray stated that the years between 1956 and 1966 were identified as a critical time frame for exposures, and the monitoring program information will be closely examined. Employer required x rays are also added into the dose, although the frequency of these x rays at Weldon Spring varied widely. Mr. Murray asked anyone with information on the types of equipment used and who the technicians were to contact NIOSH.

Mr. Murray explained that the Site Profile is comprised of six different sections called Technical Basis Documents. The Site Description contains information about the plant such as the radiation sources present, the processes and activities that took place there, and incidents or accidents on record. Information sources for the Site Profile include official records and what can be obtained from earlier computer files. Any additional input that workers provide would be used to augment these. He stated that NIOSH and ORAU would be interested in talking to anyone who might be able to provide information, and asked participants to reach out to anyone who could not attend.

Mr. Murray pointed out an attachment to the handout that contained a list of codes and job information. The Site Profile Team is trying to match them up; but the records are not complete, so any assistance in matching these up would be appreciated.

A comment was made that the three-digit numbers were accounting codes for calculating production costs, and were grouped by plants. For example, the 300 series refers to Building 301, the operations plant. The speaker added that the map included in the handout was fairly accurate, and the buildings could be identified. Mr. Murray thanked the gentleman and said that someone would go over those with him more specifically outside the general meeting.

Discussion Session

Question:

How could dose reconstructions be done accurately before the Site Profile was completed?
Will denied cases be revisited?



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Tom Tomes:

Some claims can be completed without the Site Profile if the claimant's employee file contains good radiation records. As long as the probability of causation is very likely to be over 50%, the information in the record is sufficient.

Question:

Many of the plant workers have already died, and it is difficult to get any documented information. When we try to get test results from Oak Ridge, they say the records were misplaced. The government has more information on all of us than we can ever produce. When workers got high doses, they were moved to another location. This is something the government obviously knows about: why can't they provide that information?

Mark Lewis:

DOE might have that information, but NIOSH doesn't. The team uses all resources available, and counts on your input to help find more.

Comment:

Many of the people who worked at Weldon Spring in the 1950's and 1960's are in their seventies. They are frustrated with what seems like a lengthy process and don't think they'll be around to see it through.

Comment:

A survivor read a description of the working conditions that said (paraphrased): Electrical workers were required to change uranium ore to metal. The Metals Building was the most dangerous one in the complex. The heat was so intense that it slowed down production – people had to work in it while it was red hot and had to stop when they got burned. There was radiation coming off the machinery such as the extrusion press. They made rods for reactor fuel. They received lethal doses from several explosions. There were explosions in the area on a regular basis.

The survivor said that the claimant worked in the Metals Building during the critical years of 1957 to 1963. Following a diagnosis of colon cancer, a claim was filed in 2001. A detailed letter was submitted along with the claim, but the survivor expressed doubt that it had been read. The claimant had a phone interview in April of that year, then died in June. Despite the fact that so many details were included in the letter, the claim was denied.

Comment:

Workers handled material with nothing more than cotton gloves for protection. The only other measure taken was to wear coveralls in the core area.

Comment:

Secretaries were exposed as well as production workers. Air supplies and dust collectors had radioactive residue that was exhausted into the air, and then returned back into the plant. Air samples were taken regularly and sent to the lab, but the results were never released to workers.



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Comment:

The two year employment requirement is not reasonable. A worker can get enough exposure in a short time to cause cancer due to the intensity of the radiation.

Mr. Murray asked if there were any more questions or comments. He thanked participants for attending, and Ms. Brock for her assistance with the arrangements. The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m.