BTMED news

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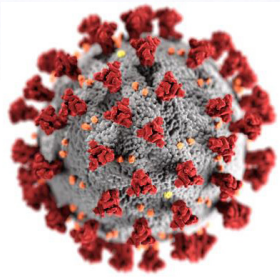
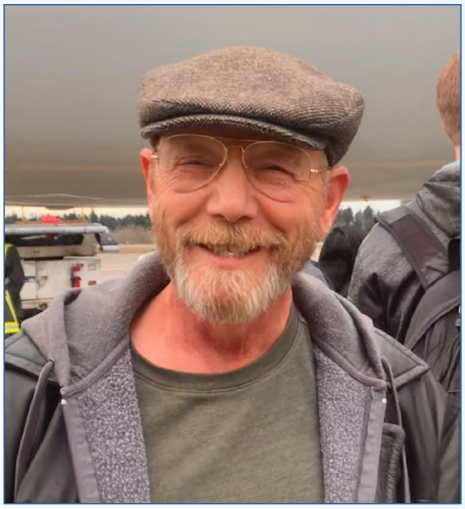
Getting Back to Normal



BTMed is speeding up its restart. We are now scheduling medical screening exams at most locations and providing CT scans with all our ELCD providers. Vaccinations are key to this accelerated start-up. About 80% of BTMed participants contacted so far say they have been or intend to be vaccinated. We strongly encourage all participants to get vaccinated. If you have any questions or are due for an exam, call **1-800-866-9663** or email **btmed@btmed.org**.

BTMed CT Scan helps find liver cancer in former Rocky Flats worker



BTMed provides annual lung cancer screening to eligible participants determined to be at high risk for lung cancer. BTMed uses low-dose CT scans to detect lung cancers at an early, more treatable stage. CT scans of the chest can also sometimes detect disease in other organs that just happen to be in the field of the view of the scans.

This was the case for Joseph Cousineau, a former Rocky Flats worker who worked at the site as an electrician out of IBEW 68. He spent three years performing electrical maintenance and repairs in many areas around the site. Although he wasn't sure what he may have been exposed to or if his health had been affected, Joseph decided to sign up for a screening with BTMed. "It's free cancer screening once a year," he thought, "So why not?".

Joseph's last CT scan showed a liver lesion and when he had it further evaluated with a specialist it was found to be liver cancer. Fortunately, the CT scan helped find his liver cancer at an earlier stage and he is currently undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Had it not been for having a BTMed scan, Joseph said he would not have known about the liver lesion. "I don't think I even had any symptoms at that time," he recalls, "I would've had no clue that there was a lesion there". Joseph is grateful for BTMed since he "wouldn't likely have been getting a CT scan otherwise". He encourages other workers out there to participate in the program, even those who don't think anything is wrong with their health, because "it's free, it's easy, and it could save your life".

BTMed Lung Cancer Mortality Study Targets Screening Criteria

BTMed's commitment to research to improve screenings for construction workers was highlighted in a study on lung cancer mortality. Published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, the study examined records of 17,069 BTMed participants, including 352 who died from lung cancer, to identify predictors that can better define eligibility for low-dose CT (LDCT) scans. Findings showed that while using only age and smoking history as criteria identified 51% of those who would eventually die of lung cancer, adding risk factors including chest X-rays, spirometry, prior cancer history, and duration of construction work raised the identification rate to 86%. The results support including additional risk factors from occupational exposures and respiratory clinical findings in LDCT guidelines to better target those at high risk, resulting in a higher rate of lung cancer detection at an early stage when treatment is likely to be more effective. Visit www.btmed.org to read the full paper.

BTMed During the COVID-19 Pandemic

While the BTMed team moved to working remotely and in-person outreach events were put on hold, we remain committed to serving our participants and continuing our outreach efforts to reach and engage workers and communicate with local unions and advisory boards across the country.

BTMed staff at the annual BTMed 2021 Team Meeting in April 2021 discussing restart plans and procedures.

Savannah River Site – Special Exposure Cohort (SEC) Update

L-Basin at SRS (*U.S. DOE)*

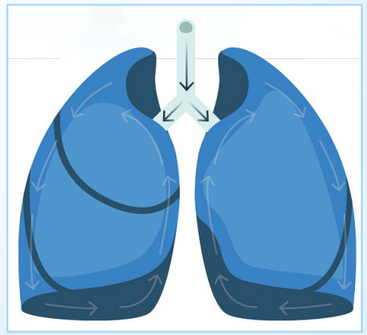
The NIOSH Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health held a virtual meeting on April 14 – 15, 2021 to discuss whether the petition for subcontractor construction workers at the Savannah River Site (SRS) should be included in the Special Exposure Cohort (SEC). The proposed class is from October 1, 1972 through December 31, 1990. The debate on whether NIOSH can reconstruct dose with enough accuracy for this class of workers has been deliberated for over ten years. NIOSH concludes that dose reconstruction is feasible using only the monitoring records from claims that have been filed with DOL. The Board's technical contractor disagrees with them.

After much deliberation the Board voted, 8 to 3, to recommend to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to include this class in the SEC which will then get sent to Congress to accept or reject it. Stay tuned for more to come. For more information on the SRS Special Exposure Cohort, visit www.cdc.gov/niosh/ocas/srs.html.

The original petitioner was part of the BTMed family, Gordon Rowe. Gordon spent 16 years at SRS working as an electrician out of IBEW Local 1579 before he joined BTMed for over 18 years helping countless SRS workers. He passed away in 2018.

Updated Analyses of COPD Risk Among BTMed Participants

A 2010 study of former DOE construction workers participating in BTMed found increased risk for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The current study of a larger worker cohort allowed for a more detailed analysis of COPD risk, including for employment beginning after the mid-1990s, when additional occupational safety and health programs and controls were implemented. The primary study objectives were to better define overall COPD risk and risk by severity according to trade while considering other factors which can cause COPD and to investigate trends in risk by time periods of construction trade work and DOE site employment. BTMed researchers examined COPD prevalence by demographic and smoking information, respiratory history, and employment history among 17,941 BTMed participants. The results found that compared to non-construction workers, construction trade workers were at significantly increased risk for all COPD and even more so for severe COPD. Findings support the prevention of both smoking and occupational exposures to reduce these risks. The study was published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* in March 2021. Visit www.btmed.org to read the full paper.



When You've Been Fully Vaccinated Against COVID-19

- It typically takes 2 weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection against COVID-19.
- You may be able to start doing some things that you stopped doing because of the pandemic.
- We are still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19. After you've been fully vaccinated, you should continue taking precautions in public places or around unvaccinated people from more than one household.
- **If you haven't been vaccinated yet, get vaccinated.**

For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines.

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RESUMING SCREENING EXAMS AND CT SCANS

BTMed has resumed medical screening exams and CT scans in most locations. Medical providers have implemented guidelines and precautions to minimize the risk of COVID-19 and to ensure the safety of participants and staff. We are closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and will modify our restart procedures as necessary. If you have any questions or are due for an exam, call us at 1-800-866-9663 or email btmed@btmed.org.

"The program is awesome, wonderful people, everyone is so helpful!"

Larry Vanhoose
Laborers Local 83
Former Portsmouth Worker

Watch our new BTMed informational video!

Watch our new video to learn how BTMed benefits the health and well-being of workers. Check out the video on our home page and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/btmed.

NIOSH Cybersecurity Modernization Initiative

NIOSH announced that effective May 3, 2021, there will be a pause in some data transfers between DCAS, DOL, and DOE as they proceed with cybersecurity modernization. This includes a hold on receiving new or rework case referrals from DOL, returning completed dose reconstructions to DOL, and receiving individual and site-specific dosimetry information from DOE. This pause is estimated to last two to four months. For more updates, visit www.cdc.gov/niosh/ocas.