BTMED news

SUPPORTED BY THE BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION TRADES DEPARTMENT, AFL-CIO • COORDINATED BY CPWR - THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION RESEARCH & TRAINING

Volume 9, Issue 1 Spring 2014 www.btmed.org

Lung Cancer Screening Program Expands

BTMed and the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance have partnered to bring a successful early lung cancer detection program to Department of Energy workers in Western Washington

BTMed and Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA) expanded their early lung cancer detection program (ELCD) for high-risk construction workers in Western Washington. As part of the program, BTMed provides CT scans that screen for early stage lung cancer in former DOE construction workers who may have been exposed to hazardous substances while working at the nation's nuclear weapons sites. The ELCD program, which continues to serve at-risk workers in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Eastern Washington, has already made a meaningful impact through the early detection and timely treatment of several individuals.

About 160,000 people in the United States die of lung cancer each year. Construction workers have a higher risk of lung cancer because of exposure to asbestos, silica, and other agents. Workers at Hanford, a decommissioned nuclear weapons production complex located near the Columbia River, are believed to be one of the highest risk populations for lung cancer. The early lung cancer detection program has provided CT scans for more than 180 workers in Washington. So far, three of those workers have been diagnosed with stage I lung cancer, undergone surgery at the University of Washington, and are now cancer-free. Norman Grnya, LIUNA Local 348, is one of them. Grnya worked for more than three decades at Hanford. "I'm claustrophobic, but the scan didn't bother me at all. It was so quick," said Grnya. "The follow-up care I received in Seattle was top notch, and they now report that I'm cancer-free."

"The success of the program has served as a model for expanding to other regions and states," said Dr. David Madtes, Director of the Lung Cancer Early Detection & Prevention Clinic at SCCA. (*cont. page 3*)

BTMed Medical Director, Dr. Laura Welch, with Dr. Madtes from SCCA.

CT Scans offer enough space that even those as claustrophobic as Grnya feel comfortable.

Has it been over three years since your last exam? Give us a call about scheduling your re-screening!

Pipefitter Helps Fellow Fernald Workers Get Screened

40-year member of U.A. Local 392 interviews construction workers from every trade in order to get them proper medical exam

"Get this, in the early days guys would actually taste the green salt to tell if it was a good batch," said Dan Hennekes, a former pipefitter who spent 23 years at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Fernald site. "That's what we called enriched uranium powder, by the way. Green salt." The workers ate uranium.

That was back in 1982 when Hennekes began his two decades worth of work, which took him all throughout the site on jobs as dangerous as gutting an enrichment uranium reactor and then installing a new one. Over that period of time he saw safety standards grow to the point that they became a true priority for DOE and DOE contractors. These standards, however, took a long time to develop. "What really made a difference was when DOE started making safety standards a part of the contract. Once the wallet was involved, then contractors began to give it the attention it deserved."

While the safety standards put in place helped better protect future DOE workers, they still aren't failsafe and they certainly can't undo the exposures already suffered by thousands of construction workers who'd previously worked on a DOE site. That's where Hennekes comes in.

The Fernald site in Fernald, Ohio where feed materials such as uranium were handled.

Since 2006 he has been a part of the Building Trades National Medical Screening Program (BTMed) conducting work history interviews for construction workers who used to work at Fernald. He asks them questions about where they worked on site, what tasks they performed, and what materials they worked with. Hennekes then forwards this information so that it can be reviewed by the doctor who will be performing the medical exam.

Dan Hennekes (right) and fellow pipefitter, Lou Doll, worked a combined 44 years on DOE's Fernald site and now manage BTMed's Fernald Outreach Office.

"I was 36 years old when I started out at Fernald tearing up reactors. And even at that age I had no idea that we were being sent in to do jobs the plant people didn't want to do. So I know most of the guys feel the same way I do. We knew it was bad, but we didn't know just how bad. That's why we all have to get checked out to make sure nothing's wrong (with our health)."

Hennekes, himself, continues to go in for his BTMed screening when he becomes eligible every three years. He knows very well that exposures don't always appear overnight. Usually it takes years before those effects begin to rear their ugly heads.

"You know," Hennekes reflected, "there was this one guy eating that green salt and I asked him why he was doing it. He says to me, 'This stuff won't hurt you until way down the road. And I figure I only got five years left to live anyway so I don't have to worry about it."

But Hennekes does have to care about it. For himself. And for all his brothers and sisters who also risked their well-being the moment they set foot on a DOE site.

For information about BTMed at Fernald,
Contact Dan at 513-681-0864

BTMed.Org Gets a New Look

Go Online To Check It Out!

View the new EEOICPA Video Series through BTMed's website!

Visit www.btmed.org/compensation and click on "DOE/DOL/NIOSH EEOICPA Involvement"

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"In partnership with BTMed, SCCA is providing state-of-the-art low-dose lung cancer early detection and ensuring that the best medical treatment in the Northwest is available to those who need it the most."

The screening is provided free of charge and participation is entirely voluntary. Former Hanford construction workers may be eligible if they meet certain eligibility criteria.

For more information, call 1-888-464-0009.

Kim Cranford greets Jerry Tobin, IBEW LU 112, for a CT scan at SCCA.

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Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Washington, DC
Permit No. 5968

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This publication was produced by CPWR through funding from the Department of Energy (DE-FC01-06EH06004). The information provided here is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of DOE.

SEC Class Added for Rocky Flats, Public Meeting Draws Large Attendance

Rocky Flats workers turned out in droves for two public meetings hosted by the Department of Labor (DOL) on February 16th held at IBEW Local 68's union hall. There, the recently added SEC designation for the Rocky Flats site was discussed. The SEC covers workers who worked for 250 days on the Rocky Flats site between April 1, 1952 and December 31, 1983, and have had one of 22 specified cancers.

Photo by RJ Sangosti, Denver Post

Approximately 150 - 200 former Rocky Flats workers and family members attended the informational meeting. They also advocated for an extension in the SEC time frame so that it continues through until the closure of the site in 2005. A petition for this extension is under review.

Other presenters at the meeting included the Former Worker Programs (BTMed and NSSP), the Department of Energy, NIOSH, and the DOL Ombudsman's office.

For more SEC information on Rocky Flats or another DOE site, visit http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ocas/ocassec.html.

Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant Workers!

A public meeting for former Paducah GDP workers will be held in the Paducah, Kentucky area this fall. Meeting info will be posted soon on www.btmed.org.

BTMed Covered Sites

Amchitka Test Site
Battelle Labs - King Ave.
Battelle Labs - West Jeff
Brookhaven National Lab
Fernald Plant
GE Evendale
Hanford Reservation
Idaho National Lab
Kansas City Plant
Mallinckrodt
Mound Plant
Oak Ridge Reservation
Paducah GDP
Pinellas Plant
Portsmouth GDP
Rocky Flats
Savannah River Site
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
Weldon Spring
Yucca Mountain

And other Department of Energy sites.