BTMED news

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BTMed 'Could Mean Your Life' Says Boilermaker's Wife

Savannah River Site worker Frank Rose found to have early lung cancer, now cancer-free

When Frank Rose received an invite from BTMed to participate in its Early Lung Cancer Detection (ELCD) Program, he didn't have any symptoms. Still, Frank decided to take advantage of BTMed's ELCD Program and go in for the CT scan. After spending a lifetime as a boilermaker, Frank knew it was important to check on his health even when he felt well.

Frank Rose with his wife, Lynn.

"As a boilermaker—and I was a boilermaker a long time—the stuff we gotta work in, it's gotta cause something," he said. "I'm not complaining; I made a good living for 40 years. But there's no way that you work around all we had to and not need to be checked out."

A retired member of Boilermakers Local 687, Frank spent 15 years working all across the Savannah River Site complex. In the boilers. In the reactors. In the tank farms. He spent most of his time in the 100 and 200 areas performing jobs that involved asbestos—tearing it down or even wearing it. "We used to have asbestos blankets—fireproof—to keep the fire from burning you," he said. "And we would wrap them around ourselves like a cloak."

It wasn't until decades later that these types of exposures caught up to him. When he went in for his first CT scan, the doctor saw it right away: three small spots on his lung—each a centimeter in diameter. Frank went back for a six-month follow-up scan and those spots had grown from one centimeter to seven centimeters. The spots on his lung were right behind his heart, so the doctor couldn't biopsy them. They needed to be removed right away, the doctor said,

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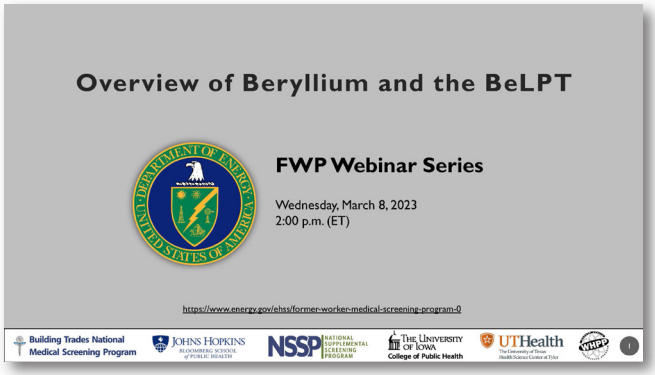
DOE and Former Worker Programs Webinar Series Continues

DOE and the Former Worker Programs—including BTMed—continued its public webinar series with a second episode that shared information about beryllium and the beryllium lymphocyte proliferation test (BeLPT). The panelists discussed the origin and use of beryllium, and why the BeLPT is important for former workers.

To view a recording of this and past episodes, visit www.btmed.org and click on the "Publications" tab and select "DOE/FWP Webinars."



To learn about future webinars, email us at btmed@btmed.org to make sure we have your email address!

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and so he referred Frank to a specialist. As it turned out, the spots were cancerous.

"The cancer was spreading, and they caught it in time," Frank said. "So if I hadn't got started with the program, it might've been too late."

BTMed put Frank in touch with the Department of Labor's Resource Center for the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICPA) so he would get the information and assistance that he needed to file a claim. On his claim, he stated that he felt his work's high level of exposures contributed to his illness. The Department of Labor approved his claim. "They said it was as likely caused at Savannah River Plant as not," he said.

While Frank feels grateful for having had his claim approved, he feels even more grateful for being able to celebrate two years cancer-free this summer. And he's grateful that he put his health first and got checked even when nothing felt wrong.

"If you got the opportunity to be checked, be checked," Frank simply said over the phone.

"It could mean your life!" shouted a voice in the background.

"Like my wife said, 'It could mean your life.'"

Thank You, Dr. Stella Hines!

BTMed would like to thank Dr. Stella Hines for her years of dedicated service as BTMed's co-medical director. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors that will certainly continue to benefit workers across the country!

Meet BTMed's new Portsmouth Outreach Coordinator ...

BTMed welcomes Phil Hamer as its new Portsmouth Outreach Coordinator. Phil, who was a 26-year member of Laborers Local 83, worked at Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant up until his retirement last December. While on site, he worked as a Rad Tag—monitoring radiation and contamination—and also served as Union Steward.

Phil with his granddaughter at the Portsmouth's annual Labor Day Parade.

"Portsmouth is a dangerous site," Phil said. "A lot of guys won't go out there, and I didn't go out there until I was older. So when I was out there (as Union Steward), I took it upon myself to keep my guys safe."

Phil is looking forward to continuing this proactive approach to looking out for his brothers and sisters by letting them know about BTMed and encouraging them to participate.

"Everybody I've talked to so far, I said you need to take advantage of this health screening as soon as possible. Especially the younger guys—the older guys, too—but for the younger guys, if they get in there now, they get a baseline of where they're at, and every three years they can come back to see where their health's at."

If you worked at Portsmouth GDP, you can reach Phil at 740-464-4783 or phamer@zenith-american.com.

BTMed Publishes Study on Construction Worker Reductions in Occupational Health Risks Over Time

BTMed recently published a study showing the positive impact that occupational health protections for construction workers have had over the past 60 years. The study investigated changes in relative risks for pneumoconiosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer, and hearing impairment.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

WILEY

How much have adverse occupational health outcomes among construction workers improved over time? Evidence from 25 years of medical screening

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The study, published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, was made possible by BTMed's 25 years of medical screening of construction workers who have participated in the program. Over 15,000 workers were included in each outcome studied.

Key Findings

- When compared to construction workers employed before 1960, those first employed after 1990 experienced reductions in COPD, all pneumoconiosis, lung cancer mortality, and hearing impairment.

- The greatest risk reductions were observed for outcomes with strong regulatory and legal incentives to reduce exposures and associated risks, such as those associated with inhalation hazards (asbestos and silica). The greatest reduction was for pleural plaque, by 71 percent.

- The lowest risk reduction was observed for hearing impairment, for which little regulatory enforcement and few prevention incentives have been adopted. It declined by only 20 percent.

To view the full version of this study, visit www.btmed.org.
Click on the "Publications" tab and select "Published Medical Findings."

... And BTMed's new Kansas City Plant Outreach Coordinator!

BTMed also welcomes Mike Wegley as its new Kansas City Plant Outreach Coordinator. Mike, who was a 37-year member of UA Local 533, worked a decade at the plant through the 1980s. "I started out there up on the roof because I could work up there being uncleared," Mike said. "And that's where I got into all the asbestos. We were on a pipe replacement job doing helicopter picks off the roof."

Mike also volunteers for the Osage County Fire District #1, an all-volunteer outfit.

Once he received a Q clearance, Mike worked in all areas of the building—including the beryllium processing areas and those with ionizing radiation, asbestos, and PCBs. "I was all over the plant," he said. "There were only two rooms I never went in—one was communications and the other was the computer room."

Mike has been an active participant in BTMed, going through the medical exam as well as the CT scan program. Now, he's looking forward to encouraging others to get their exam as well. "The reason I'm doing this is to help guys like me and also our union. This program can take some load off our Health and Welfare Fund and save it some money."

If you worked at Kansas City/Honeywell/Bendix Plant, you can reach Mike at 913-645-3649 or mwegley@zenith-american.com.

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Do you know when your next BTMed exam is?

If it's been 3 or more years since your last BTMed exam, you may be eligible for a free re-screen exam. To schedule your re-screen exam or to see when your next exam will be, give us a call at **1-800-866-9663** or email us at **btmed@btmed.org**.

And when you get in touch with us ...

Let us know if you'd like us to text you:

Exam Appointment Reminders
CT Scan Appointment Reminders
Re-Screening Eligibility Notifications

BTMed Team Meets in Phoenix

In January, BTMed kicked off the year with its team meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, to plan for the coming year. The team is comprised of many different individuals—including outreach coordinators who worked construction on DOE sites, nurses and doctors, data analysts, public health experts, and program staff. Each of these individuals plays an important role in the program—from helping you through the screening process to analyzing overall medical results to help improve safety measures for construction workers of the present and future.

Also in attendance were Kevin Dressman, DOE Director of the Office of Health and Safety, and Greg Lewis, DOE Director of the Office of Worker Screening and Compensation Support.

Many of BTMed's team, some of which you've met along your BTMed way.