BTMED news

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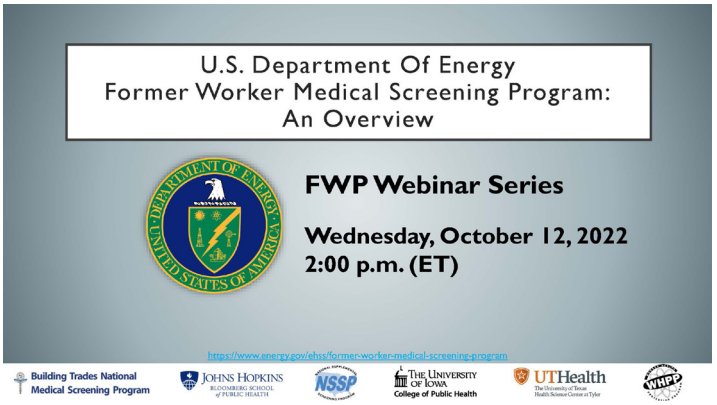
DOE and Former Worker Programs to Host Webinar

October 12, 2022
2 p.m. (ET)

DOE and the Former Worker Programs—including BTMed—are partnering to host a public webinar that will share information about the national and site specific programs. The panelists will discuss the history and functions of the Former Worker Medical Screening Program, introductions to national and site specific programs, and share medical screening findings.

Attendance is voluntary and open to the public.

Visit www.btmed.org and register today!



Oak Ridge, Hanford Painters Discover Illnesses Through BTMed

"When we first went out there, they didn't protect us like they should have," Gerald Potter said. "And we really didn't know what was there or what it could do to us." A longtime member of IUPAT Local 437, Potter worked for three decades on the Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee, applying paints and coatings.

With a Q clearance, Potter spent a lot of time in contaminated areas of the site. Sometimes those contaiminated areas surprised him—like the buildings that he and his coworkers frequented that were suddenly off-limits.

A tank farm at Hanford. *(Photo: DOE)*

"There were buildings where we would go with our lunch boxes, and then years later they were shut down, and you would have to be fully dressed out to be in them," Potter said. "They were contaminated, and we had been in there eating our lunch."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, Brent Cruthers, was working at Hanford in Washington. Also a painter, the IUPAT Local 427 member was on site during its "cleanup mode" after its primary mission was done. Hanford is home to some of the most contaminated areas in the country, including the Tank Farms, where radioactive waste has spent years in aging underground containers.

"Not only was it construction work, but you had radiation to deal with," Cruthers said, describing the hazards of his job, which included removing contaminated paint and installing pipe out in the Tank Farms.

This work is why Potter and Cruthers both enrolled in BTMed for their free medical exams. And both are well aware that it can sometimes take years for work-related health conditions to develop.

(Continued on next page)

Ask our BTMed Medical Team!

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is a sensation of ringing in one or both ears, even though there is no external sound present. There are many possible causes of tinnitus, including age-related hearing loss, exposure to loud noises, or injury or illness in the structures or nerves of the ear.

Why does my x-ray get read by a B-reader?

A "B-read" is a detailed, systematic reading of a chest X-ray that looks for changes in the lungs resulting from exposure to certain dusts, such as silica and asbestos. A B-reader is a radiologist or other doctor who has special training in reading chest X-rays for occupational lung diseases.

What is the difference between Beryllium Sensitivity and Chronic Beryllium Disease?

Beryllium sensitivity (BeS) refers to a type of allergic reaction to the presence of beryllium in the body that can happen in some people after inhaling beryllium dust particles. Beryllium sensitivity is measured through a blood test known as a beryllium lymphocyte proliferation test (BeLPT). Only a small number of people with beryllium sensitivity will go on to develop chronic beryllium disease (CBD), an incurable, progressive loss of lung function that can happen years after the beryllium exposure.

If you have a general medical question for our medical team to answer in a future BTMed Newsletter, please email it to btmed@btmed.org

BTMed's Terry Mosier Retires

This past summer, one of BTMed's longest-tenured nurses—Terry Mosier—retired to spend more time with her grandchildren. Terry began with BTMed's medical team in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, back in 2006. She always brought her smiling face to the program and helped many former workers through the BTMed screening process.

"I will miss working for this wonderful program that does so much to help our participants in so many ways," Terry said. "I have been so proud to have been blessed to be a small part of BTMed and to work with the best coworkers anyone could ever have."

Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement, Terry! We will miss you!

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"I had something on my pancreas that one of the doctors found," Potter said. "They're watching it, and it hasn't grown, but I wouldn't have found it if I hadn't gone through BTMed."

Cruthers was also able to find out more about a health condition that hadn't been identified. "(BTMed) found I have COPD five or six years ago," Cruthers said, refering to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, a lung disease that affects the ability to breathe. As a result of the diagnosis, Cruthers filed a claim with the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICPA).

Because of BTMed's role in examining their health, Potter and Cruthers are both thankful the program's in place. BTMed could find a life-threatening illness while still early enough to treat, as in Potter's case. It could also put a name to a condition that is present but has yet to be properly identified, as in Cruthers's case.

"BTMed is a good program," Potter said. "I appreciate them doing something for the workers."

Cruthers echoes this statement. "It's a good deal as far as I'm concerned."

"The doctor I saw was terrific. If I ever need to change my primary doctor, she will certainly be considered."

Steve Danay
Former Brookhaven Worker
Ironworkers Local 361

BTMed Publishes Studies on Hearing Loss, Beryllium Disease

BTMed recently published two studies in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*—one focused on hearing loss, and another focused on beryllium exposure. The hearing loss study shows that construction workers are at an increased risk of hearing impairment and tinnitus (ringing in the ears)—particularly as they become older. The beryllium study shows that that while the risk of beryllium sensitivity does not relate to the number of years working on a DOE site, the risk of those with beryllium sensitivity then developing Chronic Beryllium Disease does relate to the number of years working on a DOE site.

Key Findings of the Hearing Loss Study

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Hearing impairment and tinnitus among older construction workers employed at DOE facilities

- More than half of the study cohort suffered from hearing impairment.
- Prevalence of hearing impairment, and of tinnitus, increases considerably with age, with nearly 95% of construction workers older than 85 having a hearing impairment.
- Among the various trades, Boilermakers experienced the highest prevalence of hearing impairment followed by Carpenters, Ironworkers, and Sheet Metal Workers.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beryllium disease among construction trade workers at Department of Energy nuclear sites: A follow-up

Key Findings of the Beryllium Disease Study

- Most participants interviewed had no clear understanding of how or when their beryllium exposure occurred.
- Prevalence of beryllium sensitivity was highest for participants who worked at Brookhaven National Lab followed by Kansas City Plant.
- Among the various trades, Boilermakers experienced the highest prevalence of beryllium sensitivity followed by Sheet Metal Workers, Roofers, and Millwrights.

To view the full versions of these studies, visit www.btmed.org.
Click on the "Publications" tab and select "Published Medical Findings."

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WORD-OF-MOUTH WORKS!

Have you told your co-workers about BTMed?

If not, make sure they give us a call!

Many BTMed participants have learned about the program from their co-workers. If you haven't talked about BTMed with your co-workers, send them a message or give them a call. Make sure they know about the free medical screening exam that they may be eligible for and that they can receive a re-screening every 3 years after their initial exam.

No matter how long it's been since you worked with them, tell your co-workers to give us a call now at 1-800-866-9663 or email btmed@btmed.org.

Has it been 3 years since your last BTMed exam?

If it has been 3 or more years since your last BTMed exam, you may be eligible for a free re-screen exam. Don't wait — **appointments for the rest of the year are filling up quick!**

To schedule an exam or check when your last exam was, call 1-800-866-9663 or email btmed@btmed.org.

"I come back every three years to check on my health. They do such an excellent job of screening. Because of that, I'm here today."

Ron VanderMeeden
Former Savannah River Site Worker
Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 447