



NIOSH Dose Reconstruction Project Meeting On Nevada Test Site Profile

Date:

August 9, 2004

Meeting with:

Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters

Attendees:

Dan Dyrdahl	Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters
Marc J. Furman	Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters
Diane L. Case	Department of Labor
Sandie Medina	NTS Medical Surveillance Project Office

NIOSH and ORAU Team Representatives:

Stuart Hinnefeld – National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)/Office of Compensation Analysis and Support (OCAS)

William Murray – Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU)

Gene M. Rollins – Nevada Test Site (NTS) Site Profile Team Leader

Mark Lewis – ATL International Inc.

Dawn Catalano – ATL International Inc.

Proceedings

The Team, along with Ms. Medina and Ms. Case, arrived at the union office at approximately 1:45 p.m. to meet with several leadership members of the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters. However, a scheduling conflict had arisen. Mr. Dan Dyrdahl informed Mr. Lewis that he was the only scheduled participant available to meet.

At the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Dyrdahl told the Team that he had investigated ways to notify potential claimants about the Compensation Program and found that he was not able to produce a written record of which workers were dispatched to the Test Site. He explained that the records had not been entered into a database until recent years, and that old, hardcopy orders were never added. For this reason, he could not be sure who should review the Site Profile.

Mr. Hinnefeld asked about general experiences on the site, and Mr. Dyrdahl answered that the carpenters only worked in the construction phase so their knowledge of the site was limited. He said that the carpenters did not have a role in the reclamation, and at that point, the miners were sent in. He added that of the four years he had spent working in the tunnels, they were always newly mined. The above-ground flats were also of concern in regard to radioactive particles in the dust that covered the area. Mr. Dyrdahl stated that, although workers were always badged because it was a condition of employment, the readings were consistently zeros. He added that the badges were often collected in a bucket at the entrance of the E Tunnel by management before workers went in.



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Mr. Hinnefeld asked Ms. Medina if it would be possible to obtain summary information from interviews that she had held with workers as part of the NTS Medical Surveillance Project. She replied that the interviews were conducted under full confidentiality. She did not think it would be possible to provide the information and still protect the privacy of the respondents, even if the identifiers were removed.

Ms. Medina explained that she had been employed by the Site from 1970 to 1995, and worked at Area 12 where they performed the underground tests. She provided administrative services for all tunnels, including personnel and monitoring records for employees assigned to them. She had been in the tunnels once or twice a month in executing her duties during those years. When she inquired about the records, she discovered they had all been destroyed. In November 1996, she attempted to obtain the records, and was sent to Washington, DC, to get an order from the Department of Energy (DOE) before the records would be released. By February 1997, she was informed that the records that the twenty-five years of records had been removed and buried somewhere on the property. She said the person who was directed to do so is still working with Bechtel and the person gave her this information in strict confidence.

Ms. Medina discussed the dosimeter reports she had seen during her years of service. She said that, although the readings were typically zeros, the workers would be pulled off the job for days and interrogated about what their work involved. This is the reason she believes security matters would be an issue in public discussions of the Site Profile. Although miners, pipefitters, and trades workers all had more potential for exposure, she said that in her experience these workers were reluctant to speak out in a group setting. She mentioned that she understood that the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant had recently participated in a workshop-type meeting with a focus group format that she believed would be effective with NTS workers.

Mr. Rollins mentioned that Bechtel was very responsive in generating dose records, but Ms. Medina said that was not the case for medical surveillance records. She explained that the forms are completed by the medical surveillance workers and then they are forwarded to Boston, MA, where they are entered into a database without any personal information. Mr. Hinnefeld commented that access to those valuable personal accounts would be very helpful.

Mr. Lewis inquired about any organization of retired people that might be a useful contact for review and input on the Site Profile. Mr. Dyrdaahl replied that a small retiree group meets regularly along with the crafts union members. He also mentioned a regional newsletter that could be used to get the word out.

Mr. Marc Furman, President of the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters, joined the group at about this time. Mr. Lewis explained the Outreach Program and the original intent of this meeting. Mr. Furman said that his understanding was that the Compensation Program was not funded, explaining that he had been contacted by attorneys from INEEL and Hanford who were researching medical records. He said that they were attempting to locate medical records for claims filed under the Program, but no records of exposure could be found. This gave him the impression that filing a claim is a convoluted process with little chance of success. Mr. Hinnefeld explained NIOSH's and ORAU's role in dose reconstruction in cases such as this when DOE records are inadequate. Mr. Lewis added that the Program compensates recipients at \$150,000 with lifetime medical coverage for the disease.



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Mr. Furman asked how the Carpenters Council could help and if there was a specific timeline during which the Team needed assistance. Mr. Hinnefeld replied that the dose reconstructions are on-going. Ms. Medina pointed out that the medical surveillance program only has records back to 1992. Mr. Furman suggested that since the Carpenters International Headquarters is in Las Vegas, the Team might contact them with information about the Program. He thought it might be difficult to conduct a successful outreach on a local level since the members relocate often. He also provided contact information for the managing editor, Mr. Doug Puppel, of the Carpenter's International trade magazine that is also based in Las Vegas. Mr. Furman suggested that we decide how to craft an announcement that would have the potential to reach a circulation of more than 500,000. He added that, although there are more than 7,000 members of the Carpenter's union in southern Nevada, it is a very migratory population, with 75% having moved in and out of the area within the last decade. Nonetheless, most retirees and all current members receive the publication.

In addition to the potential to reach thousands through the magazine notice, Mr. Furman further offered to include Ms. Medina's informational brochure describing the medical screening program in pension checks that are sent to more than 1,620 retirees and survivors. Mr. Furman thought that it was likely that the brochures could be printed free of charge, considering the message and the cause that it would serve. He added that the database used for check distribution is probably the best available one for carpenters even though it is possibly incomplete.

Mr. Hinnefeld expressed gratitude on behalf of the team for the very helpful information and assistance that Mr. Dyrdaahl and Mr. Furman generously provided. The Team departed at approximately 3:45 p.m.

Attachments:

- Sign-in Sheet