

News Release



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U.S. Department of Labor signs interagency agreement with NIH National Library of Medicine that speeds evaluation of occupational illness claims

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Labor has announced finalization of an important interagency agreement with the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) National Library of Medicine that expedites evaluation of toxic substance, chemical and disease profiles for faster publication in Haz-Map, a major Internet-hosted occupational disease database.

Haz-Map is designed for use by health and safety professionals, and consumers seeking information about the health effects of exposure to toxic substances and/or chemicals. It assists the department in evaluating claims filed under Part E of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA).

“We are constantly looking for ways to streamline our claims process and reduce wait times for EEOICPA claimants to get the compensation and medical benefits they deserve,” said Shelby Hallmark, director of the Labor Department’s Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs. “The Haz-Map system will help us do that. Haz-Map’s faster posting of new data will improve the department’s capability to adjudicate claims more quickly.”

Enacted by Congress on Oct. 28, 2004, Part E compensates eligible U.S. Department of Energy contractors and subcontractors and certain individuals potentially covered under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. For an employee to be eligible under Part E, it must be established that exposure to a toxic substance was at least as likely as not a contributing factor in causing, contributing to or aggravating that person’s illness and/or death. The Labor Department is committed to assisting claimants in establishing such exposure whenever possible. Enhancing Haz-Map is one important step in that direction.

Haz-Map is used as a primary source of information for the department’s own Site Exposure Matrices database, which collects and organizes information on toxic substance and chemical exposure at covered Department of Energy and Radiation Exposure Compensation Act facilities. A streamlined Haz-Map review process at the National Institutes of Health will serve to further improve information available in Site Exposure Matrices and further accelerate the adjudication of claims filed under Part E.

The agreement also will benefit the occupational medicine community and the public as a whole. The Labor Department has contracted with Haz-Map’s chief architect, Dr. Jay Brown, to research toxic substances and chemicals commonly present at covered EEOICPA facilities. This research ultimately will contribute to the overall body of knowledge about occupational exposures and diseases, as well as increase the vital occupational exposure information available via the Internet to health and safety professionals, emergency first responders and the general public worldwide.

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