

Statement from the Director of the Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Regarding the 2020 National Day of Remembrance for Nuclear Weapons Program Workers

In October 2009, the U.S. Senate first adopted a resolution honoring America's nuclear weapons industry workers. Each year since, the Senate has renewed this resolution designating October 30 as a day of remembrance for nuclear weapons workers, including uranium miners, millers, and ore transporters. This recognition was long overdue. Many of the workers who toiled to build and safeguard our country's most dangerous weapons became ill because of their work.

Since 1942, some 380 facilities around the country have participated in the research, development, manufacture, and storage of this country's nuclear arsenal. Many of these Department of Energy (DOE) facilities were highly dangerous places to work, in quite a few cases with the exact or potential perils not clearly known at the time.

For years, workers at the nuclear weapons facilities who became ill from their work had nowhere to turn. Federal workers' compensation programs generally excluded them. Further, because of long latency periods, unique hazards to which they were exposed, and inadequate exposure data, many of these employees were unable to obtain state workers' compensation benefits.

The October 30 date to recognize nuclear weapons workers' sacrifices is no coincidence. On this date in 2000, the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA) was signed into law. The Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program has primary responsibility for administering the EEOICPA, including adjudication of claims for compensation and payment of benefits.

Toward that end, the U.S. Department of Labor established and currently manages 11 Energy Employees Compensation Resource Centers to conduct outreach and assist workers and their families with claims under EEOICPA. These centers are located near current or former DOE sites to serve the population most affected by their work at these places. At times, the resource centers' staff travel to different locations to make it easier for former workers at a site who no longer live close enough to access them easily. These centers also coordinate closely with the Division of Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation (DEEOIC) to conduct town hall meetings in different locations throughout the year. This robust outreach has resulted in these resource centers assisting claimants more than 1.5 million times through walk-ins, telephone calls, and various events.

While our country can never fully compensate those nuclear weapons workers who became ill protecting our country, DEEOIC staff go above and beyond to ensure that we provide as much assistance as possible to those in need.

For a listing of each Resource Center or to obtain additional information about how to file a claim under the EEOICPA, visit our website at www.dol.gov/agencies/owcp/energy or call toll-free at 1-866-888-3322.