

Rhoads, Carrie - OWCP

From: View <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2016 8:53 PM
To: DOL Energy Advisory Board Information
Subject: Asking for full investigation

Tuesday, April 26th, 2016

My name is Vina Colley and I am a sick worker from the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion plant in Piketon, Ohio. I am also a Co-Founder of National Nuclear Workers for Justice (NNWJ). I would like to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to speak today about the Site Metric System (SEM) database and injustice it is causing both former and current workers.

The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA) was enacted in October 2000 and is not currently being executed in accordance to its intent of compensating workers for their health issues caused by working within DOE's nuclear facilities.

The National Nuclear Workers (NNW) for Justice are asking both this advisory board and our state representative to do a full investigation on the Site Metric System (SEM) data base usage in its current practice and implementation of denying workers for job related illnesses. As you know, the database was set up to help identify workers exposures, yet in practice is being leveraged to deny compensation.

The National Nuclear Workers for Justice (NNWJ) are asking the board to verify the credentials of medical consultants who are reviewing the workers claims, as it has been brought to our attention that the consultants may not be trained and qualified in nuclear radiation health issues. We are also asking for an investigation into the qualification of the employees in the Cleveland office and other offices that process compensation claims for sick and dying workers, as they do not understand the impacts and association of the multiple chemical exposures and related illnesses and therefore should not be passing judgement. Lastly, the Labor Department citing national security justification has declined to provide the entire database to sick workers who've ask for it. This practice needs review by qualified authorities at a minimal and preferably removed. Workers have the right to know the health impacts of their employment at these facilities.

National Nuclear Workers for Justices (NNWJ) are asking for full disclosure on how NIOSH determines the dosage levels required for safe verses unsafe exposure and its related justification to turn workers down for job related illnesses. We would like to see safe dosage level determination be conducted by an independent lab.

To put it bluntly, the Site Metric System (SEM) is corrupt. Workers that were employed in places like the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Piketon, Ohio were victims of poor safety practices which resulted in workers being exposed unnecessarily. It has also been well documented that the government withheld information about what we have been exposed to. Also, the government never properly tested the workers, nor was there accurate records kept and those records that were kept have been falsified or improperly destroyed. The government admitted that they made us sick and would take care of Cold War Heroes. Yet the current process of relying on inaccurate, incomplete and dishonest system has resulted in denial of earned compensation.

One question to ask yourself is why 16 years later are sick workers being turned down for illnesses that are clearly job related? Labor Department rules say the database should be used for guidance and that the claims examiners should dig deeper if they suspect an illness has arose from working at these plants. Yet, due to unqualified evaluators, a detailed investigation into the individual cases does not occur.

Here is an example of the problem with the Site Metric System. SEM shows link to calcium flouride and skeletal fluorosis, but will NOT give any job title or anyone credit for the exposure to calcium fouride. They WON'T admit there is a link to hf or fluoride! Even though most workers at the gaseous diffusion plants show positive for flourides.

Another issue with Site Metric System (SEM) is that it does not address the multiple exposures to chemicals along with the radiation exposure.

For example, if you type into the Site Metric System database a worker's job classification like mine, an electrician, and then you type in an illness like neuropathy, which I have been diagnosed with by two experts who agree with the chemicals listed in the Site Metric System database, your claim is STILL denied by the Department of Labor's Cleveland office. Even though the Site Metric System reveals several chemicals and radiation that my job description identifies with as exposures, and my specialists provided records showing the Legacy period to these chemicals which have both long term and short term health effects according to the Glossary of Health Effects, compiled by many health agencies including: NIOSH, DOE office of Oversight, and many others my claim was again DENIED. The database is only focusing on one exposure and not allowing for multiple chemical and/or radiation exposure which workers have been exposed to.

Workers and the National Nuclear Workers for Justice (NNWJ) are well aware of Dr. Eugene Schwartz's recommendation back in 2009 and still nothing has happened to the valid claims of sick workers.

2016 should be the year where Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Act (EEOICPA) truly reaps what it has sown and enforces the intent of its mission. It is my considered opinion that the adjudication process has become corrupted and is improperly executed. The only fix at this point, in our opinion, is to take the head contractor of the program to federal court and let the Federal Judge sort out the problems and/or corruption that is currently taking place.

My bottom line is that the leadership in DC appears to be allowing career personnel in Cleveland (and the other three District Offices) to deliberately violate the rights of Claimants.

In closing, in 2010 The U.S. Department of Labor recommended further review of my claims to the Cleveland district for neuropathy, multiple leiomyomas, hypothyroidism, osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, lung nodules, pulmonary edma and immune system disorder. As of today ALL claims through the Cleveland office have been denied. Again, they are denied even though I have medical documents showing proof of illnesses and exposures, and statements from medical specialist over a 30 year period. Cold war heroes should not have to spend their lives fighting for benefits that cover illnesses obtained from chemical and radiation exposures!

Please update us if there is going to be any changes made to what this program was set up to do.

(NNWJ) National Nuclear Workers for Justice
(PRESS) Portsmouth/Piketon Residents for Environmental Safety and Security.

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Please add your comments to this letter and send it to your State Representatives. We have to stand together.

Sent from my iPhone