



Veterans Exposed to Radiation Eligible for Compensation

Over the past two years, the U.S. Department of Justice has processed thousands of Radiation Exposure Compensation Act claims from individuals filing under the Onsite Participant provisions of RECA.

Many of those claims were filed by individuals serving in Japan after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The United States conducted over 200 atomic tests between 1945 and 1962. Many veterans were exposed to radiation during these tests, and the government has determined that 21 cancers are associated with this nuclear exposure, and veterans can apply to receive tax-free compensation. If the veteran has passed away, the surviving spouse can apply.

The United States Radiation Exposure Compensation Act is a federal statute providing for the monetary compensation of people, including atomic veterans, who contracted cancer and a number of other specified diseases as a direct result of their exposure to atmospheric nuclear testing undertaken by the United States during the Cold War, or their exposure to high levels of radon while working with uranium. The 1990 act provided the following remunerations:

\$50,000 to individuals residing or working "downwind" of the Nevada Test Site. \$75,000 for workers participating in atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. \$100,000 for uranium miners, millers and ore transporters.

In all cases there are additional requirements which must be satisfied (proof of exposure, estab-

lishment of duration of employment, establishment of certain medical conditions, etc.).

In some cases, however, it was extremely difficult for people to receive their compensation, especially in the case of the widows of uranium miners.

Because many uranium miners were Native Americans, they did not have standard marriage licenses required to establish a legal connection to the deceased. In 1999, revisions were published in the Federal Register to assist in making award claims.

It was passed by Congress on October 5, 1990, and signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on October 15, 1990.

In 2000, additional amendments were passed which added two new claimant categories (uranium mill and ore workers, both eligible to receive as much money as uranium miners), added additional geographic regions to the "down wind-er" provisions, changed some of the recognized illnesses, and lowered the threshold radiation exposure for uranium miners.

In 2002, additional amendments were passed as part of another bill, primarily fixing a number of draftsmanship errors in the previous amendments (which had accidentally removed certain geographic areas from the original act) and clarified a number of points.

As of July 15, 2012, 25,804 claims under the act were approved (with 9,869 denied), totaling \$1,707,998,044.

For more information about United States Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, call the toll-free number 800-729-7327 or contact your nearest Veterans Service Office (VSO).