



Worker Health Protection Program (WHPP)

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Press Release

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Early Lung Cancer Detection with Low-dose CT Scans Now Available to Former Idaho National Laboratory Workers

Idaho Falls, ID – The Early Lung Cancer Detection program, which utilizes low-dose CT scans to detect lung cancer in early stages, is now available to at-risk former Department of Energy (DOE) workers from the Idaho National Laboratory (INL). Scans will be provided free of charge to eligible former workers by the Worker Health Protection Program (WHPP). The low-dose CT scans are an added component to the medical screening program that has been available to former INL workers since 2000.

The goal of the low-dose CT scan is to detect lung cancer at an early stage, before the development of symptoms, when medical treatment is most likely to be effective. In a 2011 landmark study, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) released findings confirming that low-dose CT scans can prevent 20% of deaths from lung cancer in high-risk individuals.

Glenn Podonsky, DOE's Chief Health, Safety and Security Officer, a leading proponent of low-dose CT scans, stated, "We believe medical screening for former DOE workers honors those who served our country to advance our nuclear weapons program. Screening for lung cancer is an area that could potentially make a huge difference. The recent results of a National Cancer Institute study show clear evidence that low-dose CT scanning can detect lung cancer early and reduce lung cancer mortality."

"Because many former INL workers were exposed to lung cancer causing agents, such as radiation, silica, asbestos and beryllium, utilizing low-dose CT screening for early lung cancer detection has the potential to save lives," added Dr. Steven Markowitz, the occupational medicine physician who directs the screening program.

The Early Lung Cancer Detection Program, or ELCD, is available to former INL workers who meet pre-determined work, age and smoking criteria for lung cancer risk. Screenings will occur at Teton radiology in Idaho Falls.

Beginning in 2000, WHPP has provided the Early Lung Cancer Detection program as a pilot program to workers from seven sites in the DOE complex. As a result of the NCI study, the DOE called for an expansion of low-dose CT scanning programs, which now includes INL. To date, over 11,000 DOE workers have received low-dose CT scans through the program and 85 lung cancers have been detected, with the majority (73%) found in early stages.

WHPP also works to make participants aware of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICP). “Our program helps DOE workers understand and navigate the EEOICP and will work in cooperation with the compensation program to assist DOE workers in receiving what they are entitled to,” said Dr. Markowitz.

Former INL employees may call toll-free at 1-866-228-7226 to get more information about eligibility.

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The Worker Health Protection Program (WHPP) is a free medical screening program operated by Queens College of the City University of New York and the United Steelworkers, with funds provided by the United States Department of Energy (DOE) under Award Number DE-FC01-06EH06008. WHPP utilizes expert occupational medicine physicians and support staff to provide independent medical screening to DOE workers who are at risk of illnesses related to their work. The primary goals of the program are to detect illnesses at an early stage when medical intervention may be helpful and to determine if these illnesses are occupational in origin.