

ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL MEDICAL RESOURCES

The Oak Ridge Reservation Health Effects Subcommittee is a citizens advisory group that provides advice and recommendations to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on their public health activities at the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR). The subcommittee has prepared this fact sheet on available medical resources to provide guidance to persons seeking medical assistance for an environmentally or occupationally related illness or injury.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is the principal federal public health agency responsible for evaluating the potential for harmful human health effects related to exposure to hazardous substances in the environment. Congress created ATSDR to implement the health-related sections of the Superfund law and of other laws that protect the public from hazardous wastes and environmental spills of hazardous substances.

The mission of ATSDR is to serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances. As part of its mission, ATSDR is conducting an evaluation, known as a public health assessment, of the Oak Ridge Reservation site. The public health assessment process is used to determine whether releases of hazardous substances from a site could have affected the health of the people in nearby communities.

The public health assessment process is the primary method that ATSDR uses to

- identify populations who live off the site and who could have been exposed to hazardous substances at levels of health concern,
- determine the public health implications of the exposures,
- address community health concerns, and
- recommend follow-up public health actions or studies to address the exposures.

ATSDR's Congressional mandate **does not** permit the agency to provide medical diagnosis or treatment. However, if ATSDR—in its public health assessment of the Oak Ridge Reservation—identifies exposures off the site at levels of health concern, the agency can conduct follow-up public health activities. These activities can include education and training of health care providers (doctors, nurses, and other health professionals), and health surveillance (medical screening) to identify and prevent or reduce exposure and illness.

Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC)

The Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC) is a nonprofit organization. The Association has a network of more than 70 clinics and more than 250 physicians and other health care providers. AOEC members are committed to improving the practice of occupational and environmental health through information sharing and collaborative research. The goals of AOEC are to

- aid in identifying, reporting, and preventing occupational and environmental health hazards and their effects;
- encourage the provision of high quality clinical services for people with work or environmentally related health problems;
- provide a means for occupational and environmental health clinics to share information that will better enable them to diagnose and treat occupational and environmental diseases;
- increase communication among clinics concerning issues related to patient care;
- facilitate liaison between clinics and agencies responsible for workplace and environmental monitoring; and
- provide a source of data for research projects related to occupational and environmental health.

Persons who think something in the environment (in air, water, soil, or food) is causing illness in some member of their family can request assistance from AOEC by calling 202-347-4976 or by accessing the AOEC Web site at <http://www.aoec.org>. AOEC will give you the name and telephone number of an occupational or environmental clinic that can provide quality health care and information on specific illnesses and health risk. Also, even though no AOEC clinics are in the immediate Oak Ridge area, all the AOEC clinics are willing to provide consultation and advice by telephone to primary care clinicians seeking answers to questions on diagnosis and management of illnesses related to occupational and environmental illnesses and injury.

Medical Resources for Oak Ridge Reservation Workers

Programs are available to help current and former Department of Energy (DOE) Oak Ridge Reservation workers with an occupationally related illness or injury. Three programs have been funded by DOE to provide medical evaluations of persons who qualify for the programs. Workers may also receive federal compensation (including medical benefits) for certain medical conditions. Occupational illness or injury should be reported to your employer immediately.

Former Beryllium Workers Medical Surveillance Program

The medical surveillance program for former beryllium workers provides medical screening for all DOE and DOE-contractor personnel who worked in plants where beryllium was processed. The screening consists of a blood test and a health questionnaire. Workers exposed to beryllium dust or fumes may develop chronic beryllium disease (CBD) or sensitivity to beryllium. The screening is conducted by the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) under the direction of Dr. Donna Cragle.

Additional information on the testing program is available at 1-866-812-6703 or at the ORISE Web site: http://www.ornl.gov/cer/BMSP_pro/be-home.htm.

Former Oak Ridge Construction Workers Pilot Project

The pilot project for the former Oak Ridge construction workers is directed by Dr. Eula Bingham of the University of Cincinnati. This project is conducted jointly with the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, Duke University Medical Center, Zenith Administrators, and MedStar Research Institute. The project will identify which former construction workers may be at risk for health problems related to their exposures at the Oak Ridge facilities and offer the workers an opportunity to participate in a free medical screening program.

Former workers at the Oak Ridge Reservation site who want to learn more about this project and whether it relates to them may contact the Knoxville/Oak Ridge Building Trades Medical Screening Program (toll-free at 1-888-464-0009) or Dr. Bingham (513-558-5728 or by e-mail at eula.bingham@uc.edu).

Former Production Workers from Oak Ridge K-25, Paducah, and Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plants Pilot Project

The pilot project for the former production workers from the gaseous diffusion plants at Oak Ridge K-25, Paducah, and Portsmouth will determine which production workers at gaseous diffusion plants might be at significant risk for health problems related to their work exposure and offer those workers an opportunity to participate in a free medical screening program.

This project is directed by Dr. Steven Markowitz of Queens College, City University of New York, for the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE).

If you are a former K-25 worker and want to learn if this project relates to you, you can obtain more information on the program at <http://www.pace-workerhealth.org> or by contacting the PACE Worker Health Protection Program (toll-free at 1-888-241-1199).

Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program

The U.S. Department of Labor is the lead agency in administering the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program. This federal compensation program provides benefits (\$150,000 plus medical benefits) to eligible employees and former employees of DOE, its contractors and subcontractors, or to survivors of eligible employees. The program covers Oak Ridge Reservation workers who have chronic beryllium disease, beryllium sensitivity (medical benefits only), or who have been diagnosed with cancer that has been linked to exposure to radiation.

You can obtain more information on the federal compensation program at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa/regs/compliance/owcp/eeoicp/main.htm> or by contacting Shirley White (865-481-0411 or toll-free at 1-866-481-0411; by e-mail at or.center@eh.doe.gov; or by mail at the Resource Center, Jackson Plaza Office Complex, 800 Oak Ridge Turnpike—Suite C-103, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830).

The Department of Energy's Office of Worker Advocacy will assist workers in filling out claim forms for the federal compensation program. For some health conditions, the Office of Worker Advocacy may assist workers in applying for the state of Tennessee's worker compensation program.

You may get more information by calling DOE's Office of Worker Advocacy (toll-free number: 1-877-447-9756) or from the DOE Web site at <http://www.eh.doe.gov/advocacy/>. Information on the Tennessee Division of Workers' Compensation can be found at <http://www.state.tn.us/labor-wfd/wcomp.html>.