

Sick workers owed money

Meetings help those who qualify for compensation

By Scott Leffler
SUNDAY STAFF

Former nuclear plant workers or their survivors are being encouraged by the U.S. Department of Labor to attend a workshop in Amherst this week that will show them how to collect money.

A new law, which went into effect Aug. 1, provides a \$150,000 lump sum payment to workers who are or were seriously ill from exposure to beryllium, silica or radiation while working for the U.S. Department of Energy, or a company doing work for the Energy Department in the early 1940s to late 1950s.

Labor Department officials will be on hand from Tuesday through Friday at the Hampton Inn in Amherst to help anyone who wants to learn more about the \$150,000 benefit available to former workers or their families, and to help them file a claim for the compensation.

Thirteen such sites exist in Western New York, making it one of the most affected areas in the country, according to Hal Glassman of the Labor Department.

While he isn't certain of the number of local people who may be eligible, Glassman said only 200 of the 12,500 claims filed nationwide have come from the Buffalo-Niagara area.

"There's been a low turnout from this area, and that may be for any number of reasons," said Mary Brennan-Taylor, district representative for Congressman John J. LaFalce. "The onus is on us to get the word out."

Charles Leavitt said he is seriously considering filing for compensation.

Although he's familiar with the compensation program, the 72-year-old former Simonds Saw and Steel employee said he hasn't filed yet because he isn't sure if the medical problems he's had are work-related. He worked at Simonds for more than 35 years.

"I'm having a problem and I'm wondering if it's related or not," he said. "I didn't realize I had a problem, but I'm beginning to think I do now."

"I know of five or six fellows that have had problems that I'm beginning to wonder if I've got. I didn't want to waste my time because I didn't think I was entitled to anything," he said.

Now, he's going to take the time to go to the doctor.

"I was talking to another fellow. He's already filed the papers," Leavitt said.

Leavitt isn't confused by one popular misconception that workers have to have died from cancer.

"The law says that it is more likely than not that if he had cancer and worked there, he most likely will be eligible — even if he smoked four packs (of cigarettes) a day," Glassman said.

"The Department of Labor is really trying to be flexible with this," Brennan-Taylor said.

Not everyone will be approved for the compensation, though.

"We don't want to raise expectations that we've got a briefcase full of \$150,000 bills just waiting to hand out," Glassman said. "You've got to be eligible."

The Labor Department will not contact people who may be eligible, however, Brennan-Taylor said — people must get in touch with the department.

The Labor Department wants people to know that they may be eligible, Glassman said: "We want to make sure that those who are eligible to file a claim, file a claim. We're not looking to deny people."

Glassman also said the four claim forms were designed with ease in mind.

"We try to do it so that elderly people can fill them out," he said.

To be eligible, workers must provide medical evidence of their disease and proof that they worked at an eligible site during the time that the site worked with the DOE.

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HAL GLASSMAN
LABOR DEPARTMENT

Workers may schedule appointments by calling toll-free, 1-866-363-6993, but appointments are not necessary.

For more information about the law, workers can call toll-free, 1-866-888-3322, or visit the Labor Department's Web site at www.dol.gov.

If you go

The resource center is available from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and from 8 a.m. to noon Friday.

The Hampton Inn in Amherst is at 10 Flint Street. Off the I-290, it can be reached from exit 5B. There will be free parking available, and it is handicapped-accessible.

Make sure to bring the necessary documentation, including proof of employment, medical proof of cancer, marriage certificate (if applicable) and death certificate (if applicable).

Sick Workers, cont'd...

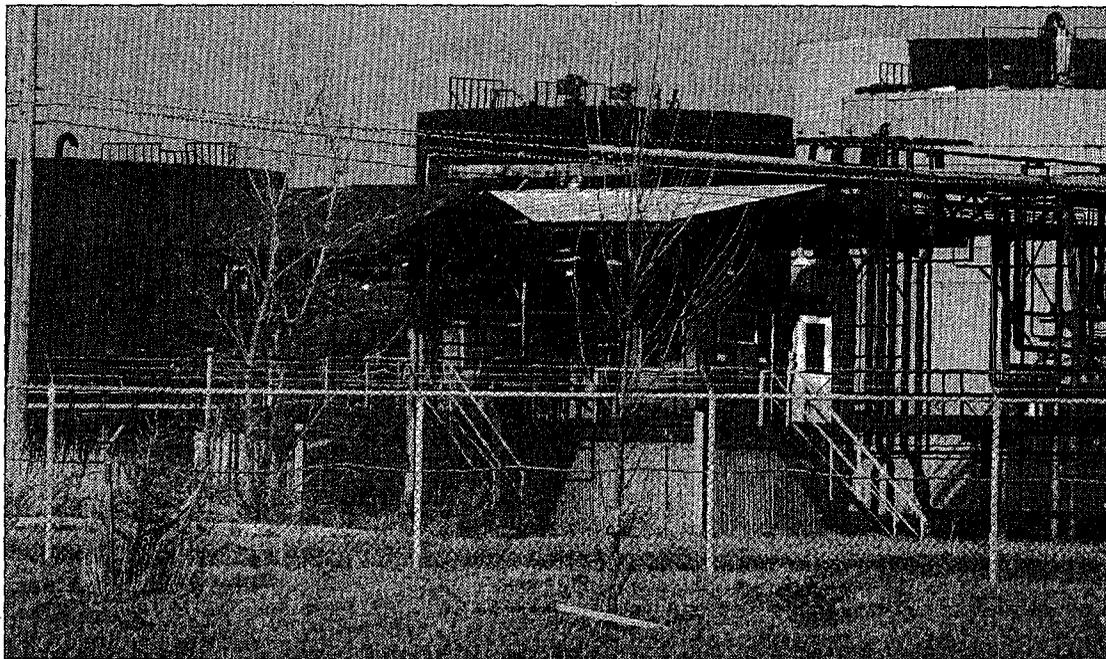
Government help

There are 13 former nuclear sites in Western New York whose employees may be eligible for \$150,000 compensation from the federal government for work-related illnesses.

Site	Also known as	Location	Time
Ashland Oil	Ashland #1, Ashland #2, Ashland Oil Property, Haist Property, E. Haist and co-owners.	Tonawanda	1944-1960
Bethlehem Steel	None.	Lackawanna	1949-1951
Bliss and Laughlin Steel	B&L Steel, Niagara Cold Drawn.	Buffalo	1948-1951
Electro Metallurgical	ElectroMet Corp., Umetco Minerals Corp., Union Carbide Corp., Electro-Metallurgical Corp.	Niagara Falls	1942-1953
Hooker Electrochemical	Hooker Chemical Co., Occidental Chemical Corp., Hooker Chemical and Plastics Corp.	Niagara Falls	Early 1940s
Lake Ontario Ordnance Works	LOOW, Niagara Falls Storage Site, NFSS.	Niagara Falls	1944-1953
Linde Air Products	Linde Air Products Division of Union Carbide Corp., Linde, Linde Center, Chandler Plant, Chandler Steel Plant, Linde Chandler Plant.	Buffalo	1945-1947
Linde Ceramics Plant	Tonawanda Laboratory, Linde Air, Praxair.	Tonawanda	1940-1950
Seaway Industrial Park	Charles Street Plant.	Tonawanda	1974
Simonds Saw and Steel Co.	Simonds, Guterl, Allegheny Ludlum.	Lockport	1948-1956
Titanium Alloys Manufacturing	Humphreys Gold Co., Titanium Alloy Metals, Titanium Pigment Co.	Niagara Falls	1950-1956
Utica Street Warehouse	Linde Air Products.	Buffalo	1945
West Valley Demonstration Project	Nuclear Fuels Services, Western New York Fuel Services Center.	West Valley	1966-1972

Source: U.S. Department of Labor.

Sunday



Alexander Cohn

Former employees of Ashland Oil in Tonawanda who became sick also may be eligible for compensation.