

December 2014 SPSE-UPTE Monthly Memo

Skilled Trades Make Our Laboratory Safer and More Productive

William Smith, President-Elect SPSE-UPTE

A number of bloggers on “LLNL the True Story” responded to the article in our July Monthly Memo titled “World Class Science Requires World Class Support.” Most expressed opinions similar to those of the blogger who stated that neglect of maintenance “will not attract the brightest.” I have also observed that such neglect is an obstacle to retaining key staff at all levels.

Contrary to one blogger’s opinion that Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) can accept a “few failures now and then in return for a lot less useless labor,” irregular, but frequent equipment failures are interrupting laboratory work in biology, chemistry, physics and computations across the site. The higher rate of failures correlates directly with the sharp reduction—nearly a factor of two—in the number of Skilled Trades employees working for Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC (LLNS) since the October 2007 transition to private-sector management. Unpredictable and preventable failures, many of which delay the research or handling of hazardous or infectious materials, are unacceptable.

By advocating for more emphasis on preventive maintenance, our Skilled Trades men and women serve all employees. The Department of Energy (DOE), our members and colleagues all recognize that we can’t make up for programmatic budget shortfalls by continuing to defer such maintenance. Our members support and are working to fulfill the new DOE mandates for preventive maintenance that we used to do routinely.

Timely, vital, and often invisible support provided by SPSE-UPTE Skilled Trades members minimizes down time in research laboratories and shops. In July our members repaired an air handling system for one of LLNL’s largest research buildings, Building 132, and had the affected labs and shops back in service within days.

The shortage of qualified LLNL Skilled Trades men and women nearly forced LLNS management to turn to more costly outside contractors for the repair. If LLNS had turned to contractors, facilities may also have been limited to supporting only a fraction of the dozens of impacted laboratories on a rotating basis until the contractors with the needed skills became available and completed the repairs.

With your support, SPSE-UPTE’s Skilled Trades members could do still more to enable all of us to work more safely and productively. Join us in urging management to minimize the down time of ventilation systems for both laboratories and offices by requiring contractors who service these systems to follow standard laboratory work and safety practices. Standard practices improve reliability, reduce accidents, and minimize downtime. Urge LLNS management to require contractors to use their own tools rather than unfamiliar tools provided by LLNS, and to use their own safety lockout tags, rather than the personal tags of Skilled Trades members.

SPSE-UPTE welcomes comments. E-mail comments to spse@spse.org or to any SPSE-UPTE Board member, including President-Elect William Smith at Smith324@llnl.gov. If you are not already a member, we also ask that you help advocate for all Lab employees and retirees by joining. Application forms are available at <http://www.upte.org/local/spse/join/>.

U.S. Department of Labor Energy Employees Compensation Resource Center Dublin, CA

The **Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA)** was enacted to provide compensation and medical benefits to current or former civilian employees who worked at certain government or privately owned facilities where atomic weapons were produced or tested.

Part B of the EEOICPA provides lump sum benefits up to **\$150,000** to qualified claimants who are determined to have worked at a covered facility and developed a radiogenic cancer, beryllium disease, or silicosis. Qualified survivors of these covered deceased workers may also be eligible for compensation.

Part E of the EEOICPA provides benefits to contractor and subcontractor employees who worked at certain government owned facilities where atomic weapons were produced and developed an occupational illness as a result of exposure to toxic substances. While the amount of compensation varies under this program, most employees found to have a work related illness will receive a federal payment and medical benefits for the treatment of the covered condition.

If you are unsure whether your condition is covered, contact the California Resource Center for assistance at [866-606-6302](tel:866-606-6302). They will assist you in completing the necessary forms and address any questions or concerns you may have regarding the program. The Resource Center is located at 7027 Dublin Blvd, Suite 150, Dublin, Ca 94568.

Free Medical Screening Available for Former Lawrence Livermore, Lawrence Berkeley and Sandia - California Workers

The Worker Health Protection Program (WHPP) provides free medical screening to former workers from Lawrence Livermore, Sandia/CA, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories. You are eligible to participate if you worked at the Labs cumulatively for at least one year or if you worked there for any period of time in construction or maintenance.

The purpose of the screening program is to identify potential long-term health conditions that may be related to your work and to provide personalized recommendations for follow-up as needed. The screening may identify a new health condition, confirm an existing one, or help relieve concerns about previous exposures. The specific hazards screening addresses include: asbestos, beryllium, lead, lasers, laser dyes, loud noise, silica, solvents, and radiation.

Screening sites are located at Kaiser Permanente locations throughout the Tri-Valley area. Your results will be reviewed by occupational medicine physicians at Queens College of the City University of New York (QC) and their findings may be helpful should you submit an Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICP) claim.

This program has been developed and is operated by independent health professionals at QC. To date, over 2,300 workers from the Labs and over 30,000 former Department of Energy (DOE) workers nationwide have been screened through WHPP. The program does not provide any information that will identify you personally to the DOE, the Department of Labor (DOL) or the Labs without your consent.

To learn more about the program and to schedule your appointment, call toll-free at 1-866-460-0628 or visit www.worker-health.org. Follow the Worker Health Protection Program on Facebook. This medical screening program is available for former workers only. If you are presently employed at a DOE Lab, please contact your current employer.



Correction to our July Monthly Memo article, “*The End of Lab Associates Erodes Both Institutional Expertise and Individual Benefits.*” In 2014 Medicare-eligible retirees were eligible for up to \$2,400 in health care reimbursements, and their dependents up to another \$2,400 as well. The original article erroneously stated that the limit for each was \$1,200.

Join Us

For four decades we in SPSE-UPTE have worked to make our Laboratory a better place to work by helping fellow employees and demanding fairness and transparency from Lab management. Our effort has never before been more important, and if you share this belief please go to <http://spse.org> and click on “Join Us.”