



Bill Richardson
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**Environment Department's Office of Nuclear Workers' Advocacy Helped Claimants
Obtain \$4.9 Million in Past Year**

Program Moves from Governor's Office to Environment Department

(Santa Fe, N.M.) The state's Office of Nuclear Workers' Advocacy has helped nuclear workers and eligible survivors obtain more than \$4.9 million since August 2007.

House Bill 779 established the office, which facilitates claims for workers' seeking compensation from the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act. The office helped 220 clients since its inception last August.

"This office has successfully advocated for the rights of affected nuclear workers to claims of more than \$4.9 million," said New Mexico Environment Secretary Ron Curry. "As the chief state regulator of Department of Energy facilities as well as the uranium mining industry, we have the background necessary to help those workers."

The office, which was transferred from the Governor's Office to the department recently, assists workers who became ill as a result of exposure to hazardous substances at Department of Energy facilities or in the uranium mining industry. Governor Richardson appointed former Los Alamos National Laboratory employee Loretta Valerio as Director of the office last year.

Governor Richardson pushed for the creation of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 to help compensate nuclear workers when he was U.S. Department of Energy Secretary.

Valerio, a former contract employee of LANL and Energy Employees Compensation Resource Center, acts as a liaison between claimants who have filed for consideration of benefits under the EEOICPA, DOE contractors and the U.S. Department of Labor.

"Governor Richardson has directed me to help New Mexico's nuclear workers get the health care they need and the compensation they and their families deserve," Valerio said. "Secretary Curry shares that commitment and I look forward to working with him and the New Mexico Environment Department in continuing to pursue the needs of those workers."

To contact the Office of Nuclear Workers' Advocacy, call (505) 827-0624 or for further information, call Marissa Stone at (505) 827-0314.