

## National Downwinder Compensation Program

During the informative *Remembering Downwinders* web event, sponsored by UCAN on January 27, 2021, participants discussed the continuing need for a national compensation scheme for civilians injured by radioactive fallout downwind of US nuclear weapons production, testing and waste storage sites.

Nevada Test Site (NTS) Downwinders and their congressional representatives have been working for years to expand eligibility under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, (RECA), introducing a series of bills in Congress to expand and extend RECA to Trinity downwinders, NTS downwinders within all of Utah, and to NTS downwinders within Montana, Idaho, Colorado, and other regions shown by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Study of NTS I-131 fallout dispersion to have received higher levels of fallout than the levels of fallout in areas currently eligible for compensation and care within RECA.

The NCI I-131 fallout dispersion study was made public in 1997, after many years of delay, seven years after RECA was enacted. Geographic areas revealed by the NCI study to have received higher radiation levels than radiation levels within current RECA eligibility areas have yet to be included within RECA. The following chart, taken from the county by county fallout information within the NCI study, illustrates that NTS fallout exposures in counties NOT currently eligible for RECA were in many cases substantially higher than fallout exposures in counties currently included within RECA eligibility. This is not an exhaustive list of counties.

Further information on NTS fallout doses within US states and counties can be found here: [NTS Fallout Exposure By County \(NCI 1997\)](#).

	Avg doses (rad) resulting from			
	Milk Consumption		All Exposure	
	GM*	GSD*	GM	GSD
<b>Counties currently eligible under RECA:</b>				
Beaver, UT	2.4	1.8	3.1	1.7
Lander, NV	1.0	2.1	1.4	1.9
Navajo, AZ	.8	2.3	1.2	2.0
<b>NTS Fallout Exposures in Counties NOT eligible under RECA:</b>				
Gunnison, CO	7.1	4.0	9.1	3.7
Custer, ID	13.5	4.0	15.7	3.9
Meagher, MT	14.1	3.0	15.8	2.9

Rensselaer, NY	3.2	2.7	3.8	2.5
Salt Lake, UT	3.0	1.8	3.4	1.7

\*GM= geometric means

\*GSD= geometric standard deviations

I believe that it is important for NTS downwinders, Trinity downwinders, and others to continue to work with Congress towards expansion and extension of RECA, which is currently set to sunset in 2022.

It is, however, important to extend these efforts to the many civilian downwinders who would still not be eligible for compensation for their fallout injuries within proposed expansion of RECA. These civilian downwinders include (this is only a partial list):

**Civilian downwinders of nuclear weapons production sites:**

- Fernald (OH)
- Hanford (WA)
- Los Alamos (NM)
- Mound (OH)
- Oak Ridge (TN)
- Paducah (KY)
- Pantex (TX)
- Portsmouth (OH)
- Rocky Flats (CO)
- Savannah River (SC)

**Civilian downwinders of nuclear test sites in the Pacific Proving Grounds:**

Pacific Test Sites: Bikini Atoll, Eniwetok Atoll, Johnston Island, Christmas Island, Guam.

**Civilian downwinders of nuclear weapons waste storage sites**

Cold Water Creek (and other sites)

An effort is currently underway to draft a national downwinder compensation plan. This effort should be undertaken at the same time as the effort to expand RECA, rather than instead of the effort to expand RECA.

It is possible that, once members of Congress see that the civilian downwinders of nuclear weapons production, testing and waste sites and their allies have begun to work together to draft a national downwinders compensation plan, they will be motivated to expand RECA instead- as the number of potentially eligible claimants under this proposed new national

compensation law would far exceed the number of eligible claimants under suggested expansions of RECA. Expansion of RECA would still leave out a large number of injured civilian downwinders, as seen from the list above, but it would help NTS downwinders and Trinity test site downwinders.

We may not be able to help all of us as yet, but we must work together in solidarity to help as many of us as we can.

A national downwinders compensation plan is the first step towards treating radiation- injured civilians with dignity and compassion, in the same way the country's nuclear workers ("Cold War Heroes") have been honored. I see the civilian downwinders as no less "Cold War Heroes" for the sacrifices we have suffered.

**If you are interested in helping draft the proposed national downwinders compensation act, please contact UCAN and you will receive a link to access and edit/comment on the developing draft.**

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