

## Public Notice: Report on Phase 1 and 2 of the investigation by an independent Occupational Medical Practitioner on the state of health of former employees of the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa)

Continued unsubstantiated claims in the media by Earthlife Africa (ELA) and the Pelindaba Working Group, asserting that the health of former employees, in particular radiation workers, was impaired due to exposure to radiation at Necsa, resulted in the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa) appointing an independent Occupational Medical Practitioner to perform comprehensive, in depth examinations to clarify ELA's uncorroborated claims. 207 files were investigated. The Medical Practitioner invited all to a full medical examination. *Fifty workers (45 former employees, four current and one contract worker) presented themselves for physical examination. Necsa then decided on a phased approach to the investigation: Phase one involved only the 50 who presented themselves for full medical examination. Following their examinations, which were correlated with their medical records, Necsa categorically state that not one of these former employees presents symptoms that relate to the adverse effects of radiation. Phase 2 of this investigation covered the remaining 155 medical reports.*

Since its inception in the late 60s, Necsa has successfully applied international standards and procedures to protect its radiation workers. Necsa's employees were, and still are, subjected to extremely comprehensive medical and radiation exposure surveillance. Necsa's health care programme is, furthermore, licensed by the National Nuclear Regulator (NNR).

The international limit for occupational exposure to radiation is 20 milli Sieverts per annum (mSv/a). The actual average exposure at Necsa is consistently, year after year, below 1 mSv/a and therefore less than 5% of the internationally accepted limit. In other words, despite the fact that Necsa's employees, like the rest of the world's population, are exposed to radiation from natural sources like the sun, their occupational exposure results are consistently 20 times lower than international limits. The radiation workers listed by ELA who worked at Necsa's Nuclear Facilities had exposure levels far less than international limits and therefore within international standards regarding occupational risk.

Necsa's philosophy is not merely to comply with legislation, but to protect the health and welfare of its workers. Necsa has always gone beyond the legal requirements and strictly complied with all legislation in respect

of occupational injuries and diseases. As a result, Necsa remains in good standing with the Compensation Commissioner who controls the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) Fund.

To date, the former employees have requested medical file information, but have not formally submitted any claim that health impairment was caused by exposure during their period of employment, or claims for compensation. At that stage, Necsa has had no cause to implement standard processes prescribed by COIDA. Necsa, however has now reported all 207 cases to the Compensation Commissioner.

Necsa's independent investigation is now completed and delivered the anticipated results. The following table consolidates the outcome of Phase 1 of the investigation, during which the 50 employees were physically examined by the independent Occupational Medical Practitioner. (It is important to note that others, through the involvement of ELA, refused to participate in medical examinations. This obviously complicated the investigation as the information in their medical files could not be supported by physical medical examinations as required in the COIDA process).

The 50 former employees investigated are numbered from 1 to 50 in the table below. Their ages at date of employment and in 2006 as well as their years of service with Necsa are shown. (The years of service are important because the potential to contract an occupational disease increases with the period of exposure.) The columns indicate the employment job category, the possible risks that the individuals could be exposed to, the possible occupational diseases contracted at Necsa as well as at other employers and non-work related diseases. The noise induced hearing losses found by the Occupational Practitioner will be reported to the Compensation Commissioner in terms of the COIDA for consideration.













