VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Charge to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Committee for PACT Act Section 506

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Health Outcomes Military Exposures (HOME),
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NASEM Background on Study

- Feasibility of Assessing Veteran Health Effects of Manhattan Project (1942-1947) Related Waste at: https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/feasibility-of-assessing-veteran-health-effects-of-manhattan-project-1942-1947-related-waste
- This feasibility study will identify, understand, and delineate a process for accessing available data and information pertaining to Veterans who served on active duty during the Manhattan Project (1942-1947), including locations, types of exposures (e.g. chemical, radiation, or combined), demographic and military characteristics, exposures outside of the Manhattan Project, and health outcomes including cause of death.
  - The assessment will determine whether a full epidemiologic study can be conducted as directed in PL 117-168 (PACT Act).

History of the Project

- The Manhattan Project was a top-secret World War II government program in which the United States rushed to develop and deploy the world's first atomic weapons before Nazi Germany.
  - The use of these weapons by the United States against Japan in August 1945 ultimately became one of the most important historical events of the 20th century.
  - While the Manhattan Project took shape at three primary locations across the country: Hanford, Washington; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Oak Ridge, Tennessee there were other areas involved for mining, refining and research.
- The project helped develop three communities (Hanford, Los Alamos, and Oak Ridge) that are thriving today and are now part of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. https://www.nps.gov/mapr/learn/manhattan-project.htm#:~:text=The%20Manhattan%20Project%20was%20an,atomic%20weapons%20before%20Nazi%20Germany

PACT Act

- The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 directed that VA address the Manhattan Project through Section 506:
  - **Study On Health Effects Of Waste Related To Manhattan Project On Certain Veterans.** (a) STUDY.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) for the conduct of a study on the health trends of Veterans who, while serving in the active military, naval, air, or space service— (1) participated in activities relating to the Manhattan Project (including activities relating to covered waste) in connection with such service; (2) resided at or near, as determined by the Secretary, the locations described in subsection (b)…

Statement of Work

- An ad hoc committee of NASEM will conduct a feasibility assessment of the congressionally requested study on the health effects of radioactive materials or waste related to the Manhattan Project on Veterans who served on active duty in the military in accordance with PL 117-168, PACT Act of 2022.
- The feasibility assessment will identify, understand, and delineate the process for accessing available records.
  - To the extent that records or data dictionaries for these records are available, the committee will characterize the information they contain, as well as the quality and completeness of those records related to these aspects.

Statement of Work (Continued)

1. The approximate number of Veterans exposed to toxic substances during the Manhattan Project (January 12, 1942- August 15, 1947) at the following sites across the United States:

A. St. Louis County, MO - Coldwater Creek, St. Louis Airport Site, West Lake Landfill

B. Oak Ridge, TN

C. Hanford, WA

D. Other locations "proximate to covered waste" at:

- Los Alamos and Alamogordo, NM
- Lake Ontario Ordinance Works, Buffalo, NY
- University of Chicago, IL
- Iowa State, Ames, IA
- Dayton Project, Dayton, OH
- Monticello, UT
- Uravan, CO

Statement of Work (Continued)

2. Demographic and military characteristics of the Veterans determined to have participated in the Manhattan Project (e.g., age, sex, race, tasks performed related to the Manhattan Project).
3. Types of exposures (e.g., chemical, radiation, combined exposures).
4. Other missions these Veterans were involved in before or after the Manhattan Project that may have exposed them to toxic substances and may have contributed to their overall health risks during their military service.
5. Health outcomes including cancer occurrence and cause of death of the exposed Veterans.
   - The committee will provide a report on the format (e.g., electronic, paper, other) and sources of available records as well as their contents to the extent possible. Site visits may be conducted to covered sites to better understand possible exposures or availability of paper records.

Statement of Work (Continued)

- The committee will also provide conclusions regarding its assessment of the ability to conduct the Congressionally requested study. If conducting the study as requested by Congress is found to be possible based on the committee's assessment, the committee will recommend a design framework for the study and an estimate of the time and funding required to conduct such a study.
- If conducting the study is not found to be possible given the availability or state of data, the committee will explore possible alternative options for understanding the health effects on the Veterans due to exposures from the Manhattan Project.

HOME Contact with Federal Agencies

- Department of Energy (DOE)
  - The DOE Office of Legacy Management was contacted. They retain significant information about the Manhattan Project, including some lists of participants.

- Department of Defense (DoD)
  - The Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Nuclear Test Personnel Review Program was contacted. They did not have specific information about the Manhattan Project.

VA HOME Contacts for Questions

- Dr. Patricia Hastings, Chief Consultant
  [redacted]
- Dr. Aaron Schneiderman, Director Epidemiology
  [redacted]
- Mr. Danny McClung, Radiation Health Physicist
  [redacted]
- Dr. Peter Rumm, Director of Policy
  [redacted]
- Mr. Marc Bowen, COR (Contract matters)
  [redacted]