

My name is Cipriano Lucero and I am 63 years old. My birth date is 03/24/1954 and I live in Grants, New Mexico. I began working in the uranium mines in April of 1977 and continued working in uranium until 1985. I began my career working in what was called the baskets. The baskets were filled with resin and water that needed forced through the basket holes. I was responsible for the aeration of the baskets with air hoses connected to a 4-foot nozzle that forced the ore through the basket holes. I also worked on the mud presses. The mud press was where the yellowcake was separated from the mud and leaching chemicals and then the yellowcake was sent to the dryers to prepare it for transportation. After the yellowcake was dry, it was loaded into 55-gallon barrels or drums. The barrels were then sealed, (this job did not always end well with some of the seals blowing off the drum and sending yellowcake everywhere), and then the barrels were washed down with an acid wash to remove any yellowcake on the outside of the drum. After the barrels were clean, they were loaded into semi-trucks and then they were shipped out.

I also worked in the yellowcake tank area and part of the job required me to remove the yellowcake from the floors and walls of the processing areas. To do this part of the job, large scoop shovels and large flat scrapers were needed as the yellowcake was stuck on every surface in the yellowcake area. When the yellowcake was dry it had the consistency of baking flour, so when it was being loaded into the barrels via a drop chute, the whole room was a giant dust storm of deadly yellowcake. There was a ventilation system in the form of a single fan, but it was much too small and inefficient to control the quantity of yellowcake in air and it only worked sometimes due to the yellowcake build up that covered it. The lunch room where we ate lunch was covered in a fine layer of the yellowcake as well and that was the only place we had to sit and eat. No matter how many times we wiped it down the table and chairs were always covered

in the fine yellowcake. We did not have a source of fresh drinking water, the company did not provide any water for consumption on-site so we had to carry water from home in a thermos that by lunch was also coated in yellowcake. There was a shower area, but as with the rest of the yellowcake department, it was constantly covered in yellowcake and other filth and most of the time there was no hot water to shower with. After a graveyard shift no one wanted to take a cold shower in a filthy room covered in yellowcake. I was provided with overalls to work in, but the company did not have washing machines to wash the overalls on-site, so I took them home and my wife washed them in our washer at home. My respiratory protection consisted of a single paper mask per shift and the mask was useless after the first hour or so because it was covered in yellowcake. Most of the rest of the shift I used a bandana to cover my face but that stopped little of the yellowcake dust from being inhaled directly. There was no real protection from over exposure to radiation in the yellowcake area.

After the yellowcake department shifted positions around I was assigned to the crusher department. The crusher began the process of yellowcake production. I worked in the beginning of this process by loading and dumping raw ore by ore car down a trestle to a conveyor belt that moved the raw ore to the primary jaw crusher. Ore from the mines first went through the primary jaw crusher where it was reduced to 4" or less in diameter, then on conveyor belts it was moved to the secondary impact crushers where it was reduced to less than one inch. Throughout the conveyor belt system there were several stations for workers to pick trash out of the ore and a giant magnet at the end that had to be dumped regularly. The ore then could be conveyed to the rod mill where water and chemicals were added to begin the process of leaching the yellowcake from the ore. I dumped ore from 30 or more cars a day because the bosses were always pushing us for better production numbers for more profit. The crusher department had the same problem

that the yellowcake department had, that is, one single, small inefficient fan that did not work most of the time, no potable water supply, filthy showers with no hot water, and no protection from the radiation dust that was everywhere.

After working for several years in the uranium industry I was given a dosimeter, which is a gamma radiation detector badge, to wear in my hard hat. I was told 3 different times that I had been overexposed to high levels of radiation. The first time I was over exposed, I was sent to a nurse that sent me to the medical department at the mill site, not the hospital in town, a medical department within the company. The medical department had me urinate in a plastic urinal over the weekend, I was told to bring it back on Monday when I returned to work and they would look at it then. The readings came back and showed that I had been exposed to very high radiation levels, so I was moved to a low-level radiation area for a week or two, then I was moved to the labor gang until they deemed the radiation was out of me. At that point I was returned to the area where the high readings came from. As I said before, this happened on 3 different occasions.

As a result of my overexposure to high levels of radiation, my health has been deteriorating since my early 20's and it is getting worse as I age. I have shortness of breath from the scarring in my lungs that requires me to be on oxygen 24/7. The diagnosis is officially pulmonary fibrosis, a disease acknowledged by the current RECA, (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act), program requirements. I have sleep apnea, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, a kidney transplant from kidney failure, arthritis, and diabetes. I tire very easily and must be careful not to overexert myself which does not allow for a quality in life. The medications I must take daily are a staggering amount, there are just too many to list.

I am asking you to please support the RECA Amendments for those of us that worked in unsafe environments and dangerous conditions. The companies never told us of the dangers of

working in radiation or how much radiation we were being exposed to because they wanted the profits over protecting the workers. The Post '71 uranium workers are suffering with the same illnesses and diseases as the workers before us, but we are ignored the compensation that they receive for their sicknesses. It is time for all the uranium impacted workers to be compensated justly. Again, I ask that you please support the RECA Amendments, Senate Bill # 197 and House Bill # 2049.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cipriano Lucero".

Cipriano Lucero

Mr Lucero died from Covid during 2020. He was vulnerable to COVID due to his exposures to uranium while he was a worker. Because of the limits of RECA, his family will not be eligible to collect any compensation.