



National Institute for
Occupational Safety and Health
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
395 E Street, SW - Ste 9200
Washington, DC 20201
PH: 202-245-0625

May 4, 2021

Terry Barrie
175 Lewis Lane
Craig, CO 81625

Dear Ms. Barrie:

Thank you for your letter of May 3, 2021 regarding the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program's **Cybersecurity Modernization Initiative** affecting claimants under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) appreciates your concerns and the concerns of other signatories —Ms. Faye Vliegar, Ms. D'Lanie Blaze, and Dr. David M. Manuta. In your letter you raise three important issues—necessity, notice and workarounds.

Necessity

NIOSH appreciates your support of “measures needed to increase cybersecurity.” As you know, the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program (“Program”) stewards a substantial amount of Personal Identifiable Information (PII) for EEOICPA claimants. An ongoing review by NIOSH’s information technology specialists of the security of PII data held in the Program’s claimant databases identified very significant concerns about the cybersecurity integrity of the Program’s claimant data. Recent external attacks on other federal government data systems have only heightened the need for NIOSH to significantly upgrade the current cybersecurity protections for Program data. For these reasons, NIOSH believes it was imperative to take immediate action to increase the security of the Program’s data systems.

Notice

You raise the point about importance of the lack of advance notice of the **Cybersecurity Modernization Initiative**. I share your concern about stakeholders being “left in the dark.” As was explained to me, any advance notice that a cybersecurity improvement effort was going to be initiated might have increased the imminent threat to the Program’s databases. As I mentioned above, immediate action was needed to ensure the security of the Program’s database considering recent cyberattacks on federal government

The recommendation by information technology specialists this past week to take the system "off-line" without advance notice (to protect the at-risk databases) led to our having to announce the Initiative without advance notice.

Manual Workarounds

You also inquire about "other ways" for the Program to conduct critical tasks during the **Cybersecurity Modernization Initiative**. We are developing manual "paper processes" that could serve as workarounds during the lack of cyber-capabilities available to the Program. As you point out, we must ensure that such manual processes are secure and do not place PII at risk. Developing these processes are our highest priorities as the Initiative proceeds.

Thank you again for your letter.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Howard", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Howard, M.D.
Director