

# BREA NEWS

[www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/](http://www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/)

Volume 12 Issue 1

February 2012

## From the President

by Dave Cox, [expatdave@aol.com](mailto:expatdave@aol.com)

### BREA Meetings

BREA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month (except for August), at 1 p.m. in one of the conference rooms in Bldg. 400 (except where noted).

All BREA members are invited to attend and participate.

#### Meeting Schedule

February 14, 2012

March 13, 2012

April 10, 2012

#### BREA Officers

##### President

Dave Cox  
[expatdave@aol.com](mailto:expatdave@aol.com)

##### Vice President

Ken Mohring  
[kenwadingriver@gmail.com](mailto:kenwadingriver@gmail.com)

##### Secretary

Louise Hanson  
[hanson.louise@gmail.com](mailto:hanson.louise@gmail.com)

##### Treasurer

Steve Shapiro  
[shapiro@bnl.gov](mailto:shapiro@bnl.gov)

\* \* \*

##### Newsletter Editor

Mona S. Rowe  
[mrowe@bnl.gov](mailto:mrowe@bnl.gov)

My best wishes to all for a happy and healthy New Year. And a special thank-you to Eena-Mai Franz, Ken Mohring and Louise Hanson for their many efforts on behalf of BREA during the last two years, and to our hard-working newsletter editor, Mona Rowe.

I would also like to welcome our new Treasurer, Steve Shapiro, and Membership Secretary, Carmen Benkovitz. We are fortunate that Ken and Louise will continue to serve on the Board as Vice-President and Secretary, respectively. My thanks also to the BREA members who took the trouble to return their election ballots – about 16% in all, which is a respectable figure for an uncontested slate of candidates.

Last October, retirees received news of major changes to the medical benefits plan, including the unwelcome news,  
*(continued on page 3)*



At the 2011 BREA luncheon, from left: (seated, left to right) Mary Wood, Eena-Mai Franz, Suzanne Davidson, Martine O'Connor; (standing) Louise Hanson, Sven Roosild, and Dave Cox.

## Occupational Illness Compensation

BREA members have been getting regular information through this newsletter and The Bulletin about federal evaluation and compensation programs for occupational illness. Here is information on the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program, which provides lump-sum compensation and health benefits to eligible Department of Energy employees and former employees, contractors and subcontractors, and lump-sum compensation to certain survivors if the worker is deceased. When you apply, the Department of Labor will collect medical, employment, and other information from you and make a decision about whether or not you qualify for compensation and benefits.

### Program Benefits

The Department of Labor has posted complete information online at <http://www.dol.gov/owcp/energy/regs/compliance/progbenefits.htm>. Below is abbreviated text from the website applicable to national labs like Brookhaven. To contact the Labor Department by phone, call toll-free 1-888-859-7211.

#### Part B

- Compensation of \$150,000 and payment of medical expenses from the date a claim is filed is available to:
  - Employees of the Department of Energy (DOE), its contractors or subcontractors, and atomic weapons employers with radiation-induced cancer if:
    - the employee developed cancer after working at a covered facility of the Department of Energy, its contractors and subcontractors; and
    - the employee's cancer is determined at least as likely as not related to that employment in accordance with guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services
- Employees of the Department of Energy, its contractors and subcontractors, and designated beryllium vendors who worked at covered facilities where they were exposed to beryllium produced or processed for the Department of Energy who developed Chronic Beryllium Disease

If the employee is no longer living, the compensation is payable to eligible survivors.

#### Part E

Compensation and payment of medical expenses is available to employees of DOE contractors and subcontractors, or their survivors, who develop an illness due to exposure to toxic substances at certain DOE facilities. Under Part E, a toxic substance is not limited to radiation but includes things such as chemicals, solvents, acids and metals.

Variable compensation up to \$250,000 is determined based on wage loss, impairment, and survivorship. Medical expenses are not included in the \$250,000 cap.

- Wage loss is based on the number of years that the employee was unable to work or sustained a reduction in earnings as a result of the illness. Wage loss compensation is payable for years of lost wages that are prior to regular Social Security Retirement age (usually age 65). Wage loss compensation is calculated at:
  - \$10,000 for each year in which wages were 25-50% less than the Average Annual Wage (AAW). The AAW is the average earnings for the 12 quarters (36 months) prior to the first quarter of wage loss.
  - \$15,000 for each year in which wages were less than 50% of the AAW
- Impairment is a decrease in the functioning of a body part or organ as it affects the whole body, as a result of the illness. An impairment rating is performed once the claimant has reached Maximum Medical Improvement (i.e. the condition is stabilized and is unlikely to improve with additional medical treatment). Impairment compensation is calculated at:
  - \$2500 for each one percent of whole body impairment
- Survivor benefits include compensation of at least \$125,000.
  - If the employee sustained wage loss as a result of the covered illness, and that wage loss was prior to Social Security Retirement age (usually age 65), additional compensation may be awarded.

- Mona S. Rowe, [mrowe@bnl.gov](mailto:mrowe@bnl.gov)

### ***From the President (cont'd from p. 1)***

amongst other things, that those who were previously covered at no cost will now be required to pay part of their medical costs as a monthly premium. We are concerned that some older retirees will suffer significant hardship as a result of these changes, and we have received feedback from many members. We have met with HR officials on several occasions to discuss these concerns, as summarized in the article below.

Finally, I would like to remind everyone that the success of BREA depends very much upon your participation and involvement, so please share your concerns and suggestions with us, and consider coming to our monthly meetings, and attending other activities such as our occasional lunchtime lectures and tours of lab facilities. And be sure not to forget the annual luncheon, which is usually held in early June!

## **Changes to Medical Benefits**

BREA's November 2011 newsletter announced changes in retiree medical benefits for 2012, including the requirement that all retirees would need to pay monthly premiums ranging from 10-20% of costs. Many BREA members who retired in the '80s and '90s contacted BREA to complain that when they retired, they were provided with documents stating that "medical benefits would continue at no cost," as was also stated in the benefits booklets issued to employees each year. In many cases, members who volunteered to take a retirement package offered at the time told us that one of the main incentives for their decision was the provision of continued benefits at no cost.

In response to our e-mail message in early November, some members sent supporting documentation, which we presented to the HR office, and we have now met with HR personnel on several occasions to pursue these issues. Replying to BREA members, Robert Lincoln, Chief Human Resources Officer, stated that he understood their concern, but

*(continued on page 4)*



## **Meet Maggie**

Maggie Rando, known to many as "Main Gate Maggie," greets almost every visitor to the Laboratory, including any retiree who arrives without his/her BNL ID or has an expired ID.

Rando's office is the trailer at the Lab's main gate, and she recently got a new home. The new trailer – besides being new! – is a big improvement over the previous one because it's equipped with a handicap ramp and bathroom.

Rando processes main gate access forms, checks identification and completes necessary paperwork for all visitors, with special attention to foreign nationals. "Every day is diverse," she said. "I've met many different people from all over the world. I've also met elected officials, contractors, and scientists coming to the Lab with their families to start new jobs."

She said visits to the Lab go much more smoothly if people follow procedures. "I do my best to solve problems, and I often succeed, but occasionally a visitor does not gain access to the site," said Rando. "After the tragedy on 9-11, procedures were put in place to protect our site and everyone on it. I take my job very seriously."

- Jane Koropsak, [jane@bnl.gov](mailto:jane@bnl.gov)

## Upcoming BERA Events

### Knicks vs. New Jersey Nets

**Feb. 20, 2012**

\$85 per person. Game time 7:30 p.m. Coach bus leaves Brookhaven Center at 4 p.m. and will leave after the game about 10:30 p.m.

### Knicks vs. Detroit Pistons

**March 24, 2012**

\$85 per person. Game time 7:30 p.m. Coach bus leaves Brookhaven Center at 4 p.m. and will leave after the game about 10:30 p.m.

To make reservations with payment, go to the BERA Store (M-F, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.). Tickets are **non-refundable** and are for those 21 years and older unless accompanied by BNL employee/parent. PLEASE NOTE: Tickets and arrangements are for the benefit of BNL/BSA employees, retirees, users, guests and their families.

Retirees may use the BERA weight room and swimming pool for FREE.

**Gym:** 11-11:30 a.m. and 1:30-3 p.m. general use & retirees for badminton/volleyball/basketball

**Swimming pool:** 10-11 a.m. for retirees lap swimming

**Weight room:** 2:30-4:30 p.m. for retirees

Due to current BNL employees having limited time during their lunch hour, retirees are requested to use the recreational facilities during off peak hours, which would be before 11:30 a.m. or after 1:30 p.m.

### **Medical Benefits** (cont'd from p. 3)

emphasized that because of dramatically increasing costs for medical coverage, the Lab could no longer avoid passing along a portion of these costs to retirees. Lincoln said that since at least 1954, BNL has consistently reserved the right to amend its employee benefit plans in statements that appeared in various benefits booklets, which we have since verified for ourselves.

Nonetheless, any retiree is entitled to make a formal claim regarding benefits, including costs coverage, and may do so by filing such claim with the Plan Administrator. Please contact one of the BREA officers if you would like more information, or check the following link to the BREA website:

<http://www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/default.asp>.

Finally, **payments for medical premiums should be sent directly to P&A Group**, not to BNL as in the past. For details, contact the Benefits Office at (631) 344-2877.

- Dave Cox, [expatdave@aol.com](mailto:expatdave@aol.com)

### **COMING UP**

***BREA tour of Department of Agriculture's Plum Island tentatively scheduled for May 23, 2012.***

### **Brookhaven Retired Employees Association**

BREA

Brookhaven National Laboratory

Bldg. 421

Upton, NY 11973

Phone: (631) 344-2873

E-mail: [brea@bnl.gov](mailto:brea@bnl.gov)

Web: [www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/](http://www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/)

