

# U.S. Nuclear Workers: Government waiting for us to Die to Avoid Medical Costs

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*Former and current employees of Washington state's Hanford nuclear waste site say the federal government is waiting for them to die in order to avoid paying out disability benefits.*

Speaking with King 5 News, the group revealed how they have been repeatedly denied help despite being promised benefits under the U.S. Department of Labor's Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICP).

"I've fought and I've fought and I've fought them and it's a losing battle," said Ron Stevens, a 20-year employee now suffering from COPD, cancer and kidney failure.

"They're running and hiding and denying and denying and denying, and they don't care and all this money's coming out of my pocket. And that's what's irritating me bad."

Incredibly, even though members of the group display clear symptoms of exposure to radiation, toxins and heavy metals, the federal government claims that their work at Hanford has not been a "significant factor in causing, contributing to, or even aggravating" their conditions.

"I just think that we're all getting a raw deal. I don't know why but ... they [hire] somebody that really don't know me, don't know any of us, but is going to stamp a reject on your form," said Scott Passage, currently battling severe COPD.

Sick workers lucky enough to avoid constant delays and denials are often asked to wait up to seven years for financial help according to a [2010 government audit](#).

"I could die in six months, my lungs are going that fast, and I worry about my wife. That's all," said Terry Wattenburger, who has lost more than 70 pounds due to the removal of his stomach, two types of cancer, COPD and a muscle disease.

Dale Geer, a 26-year veteran of Hanford suffering from COPD and toxic encephalopathy, managed to hold on for five years before finally receiving assistance for his lungs.

"I'm sick every day. I hurt from the time I get up until the time I go to bed," Geer said.

Despite several doctors also telling Greer that his toxic encephalopathy is directly linked to

Hanford, the Department of Labor continues to deny his claim.

“They (the government) can outwait, outlast, and outspend any of the workers that I’ve seen,” said Dr. Brian Campbell, a neuropsychologist who has evaluated countless Hanford employees.

When asked, all members of the group even said they believed the federal government was simply waiting for them to die.

“They promised us if we did get sick they’d take care of us, and now they kind of just, you don’t count now — out of the mix, out of the union. It ain’t right, it ain’t right,” Passage said.

The situation at Hanford is almost identical to the current [VA scandal](#), where sick military veterans are denied help and left to die under the government run healthcare system.

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