

Frequently Asked Questions About Applying for RECA

Questions about the application process:

- 1. Does it cost money to have your Radiation Exposure Screening and Education Program (RESEP) office help me with our claim?**
 - There is no charge to the claimant for RESEP's services. Our job is to do whatever we can to make the application process easier for you.
- 2. Are there only certain parts of the "Downwinder" application I am supposed to fill out?**
 - Yes. The same application works for all the Downwinder categories, including self-filer, spouse-filer, child-filer and grandchild-filer. Because of this, not all parts of the application apply to everyone.
- 3. How do I know which parts of the application I should fill out?**
 - Instructions were included with your application for your particular filing status that lets us know which parts to fill out. Just follow that page.
 - If you are confused with the application, feel free to call the RESEP office and we will be glad to guide you through the application over the phone.
- 4. I am not feeling well. Do I have to do the entire application process myself? Or can I have family members help me?**
 - You may have other family members or friends/ neighbors help you with the application process, but it must be filled out in your name, and you must sign it.
- 5. Where do I get copies of birth and/or death certificate?**
 - Birth and death certificates come from the Arizona State Bureau of Vital Statistics or your local health state health department. You may be also able to order birth death marriage or divorce certificates/decrees online.
 - Coconino County Office of Vital Records can provide you with copy of your birth and death certificates, phone number is 928-679-7272 or at <https://coconino.az.gov/2837/Vital-Records-Birth-and-Death-Certificat>
 - There are other locations detailed on resource sheet provided to you with application, feel free to call the RESEP office and we will assist you with the nearest location.
- 6. Do I have to go to the county where I was born to get a birth and or death certificate?**
 - Arizona State Bureau of Vital Statistics or the county health department can get you a copy of your birth and death certificates from
 - anywhere in the state. Arizona Vital Records
 - (AZ Vital Records) phone number is 602-364-1300.
 - You may also be able to order birth death marriage and divorce certificates online at <https://www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/index.php>
 - Other states may have different rules so check with them.
 - There are other locations detailed on resource sheet provided to you with application, feel free to call the RESEP office and we will assist you with the nearest location.
- 7. How do I request birth and or death certificates if I live out of state?**
 - Contact the State Bureau of Vital Statistics where you were born.
 - You may also be able to order birth death marriage and divorce certificates online.
 - Each state has their own process for how to request the documents.
- 8. Who do I need birth certificates for?**
 - You need birth certificates for all the people involved in the claim.
 - For a claim filed by a child, you must provide a death certificate for each deceased child (sibling) to establish they are not eligible for parts of the compensation. You do not need to provide birth certificates for deceased siblings.
 - All birth certificates must be original or state- issued (also known as a certified) documents, no copies.

9. Who do I need death certificates for?

- Death certificates are needed for anyone included in the claim who is deceased.

10. Who do I need marriage license/certificates for?

- Anyone who has a name change after marriage must provide a marriage certificate or something to document the name change. If there is more than one marriage you will need a marriage license or the divorce decree for each name change.
- Men need marriage certificates if they are applying for a deceased wife, but they do not need them if they are applying for themselves or for a parent.

11. Do I need to send all three documents (birth, death, marriage)?

- All females must send birth and marriage certificates (or divorce decree) to provide name changes.
- Men only need birth certificates to prove self but must provide marriage certificate when applying for a deceased wife.
- Deceased children (siblings) only need a death, not birth, certificate.

12. Can I send photocopies of my documents so that I don't have to send the originals and risk losing them?

- You may send state-issued copies of documents, but you cannot take an official document to a copy machine and send that photocopy.
- You can go to the Arizona State Bureau of Vital Statistics and get a state-issued one if you would rather not send the original.

13. Do I need to show both two years from 1951 through 1958 and the month of July 1962?

- You must only provide either 24 months from January 21, 1951, to October 31, 1958 (does not need to be consecutive) or the full month of July 1962; not both.
- Documents to prove 1951 through 1958 cannot be more than 3 years apart.

14. I have my high school yearbooks to use for proof. Do I send in the actual yearbook or send a photocopy?

- You can either send the actual yearbooks or go to the school district office and ask for certified records.
- You can photocopy the yearbook pages and have the school district certify them if you would rather not send your actual yearbooks.

15. What if I can't find proof of presence? What else can I do?

- You must have some form of proof of presence. If you are having trouble, feel free to call the RESEP office and we will brainstorm with you on different possibilities.
- If a first-degree family member has previously applied, you can refer to their claim for proof of presence on your claim (i.e., parent, sibling) as long as their proof also applies to the time frame you are trying to prove.

16. Do I need to show more than one document of proof for each category?

- One document is enough to prove each category. For instance, most of the time the church records, Navajo Nation chapter letter, school records are enough information to prove previous presence.
- Medical reports may only need a qualifying pathology report, with a certification letter. You can include more if you want, but it isn't usually necessary.
- Living uranium workers do need more than one medical document to prove disease.

17. Can I have someone who knew me write a letter verifying that I lived in the covered counties (affidavit)?

- No, a downwinder claimant may not use an affidavit for proof or presence.
- Uranium miners are the only ones that can use an affidavit (with any other additional proof they can find) to help prove their work history.

18. I was only a baby at the time of the testing, and I have no proof of my own, what documents can I use to show I was there?

- As a minor child, you can use any member of your family's proof for yourself (i.e., your parent's church, property, tax or work records, your older siblings school records, etc.).

19. I was a housewife (stay-at-home mom) during the testing, and I have no proof of presence of my own. What can I do?

- You can use any proof of presence that put you there, such as your husband's work records, property tax records, here children's school records, LDS church records, old letters address to you with a postmark, journals that mention where you or your family were, etc.
- If you are having trouble, feel free to call the RESEP office and we will be glad to brainstorm with you about different possibilities.

20. My relatives (brother, sister, mother, father, etc.) already applied and was compensated for their cancer. Can I use their proof of presence for myself, and how do I do that?

- You can use a first-degree relative's proof of presence for your claim, as long as their proof also applies to the time frame you were trying to prove. First-degree relatives are either your parents, your siblings, or your children.
- Include a letter with your claim referring to your relative's claim. Include their name, birthdate and claim number (if possible). The Department of Justice (DOJ) will research their claim and use their proof as yours if it applies. They will let you know if it doesn't.

21. I mailed in my LDS church form a while ago I haven't heard from them and I'm ready to submit application. Should I call them? What do I do?

- The LDS church usually sends a copy of your church records to you and also a copy directly to the DOJ. You do not need to wait for your copy to arrive to submit your claim. Occasionally the DOJ doesn't receive it, so if it has been a while, a call might be helpful. The LDS church can be reached at 1-801-240-3500.

22. What is certified proof of disease? How do I get one?

- The medical records used to qualify **must be certified** by the doctor's office or hospital.
- To certify the records, the doctor's office can type a letter (on their letterhead) that states, "these are true and accurate copies of actual records kept in our file on...". This must be an original signature and signed by the medical records custodian, a representative of the doctor's office or by the physician themselves.
- Hospitals certify a medical document with a form that states that they are the "custodian of the records", with a signature.

Questions about submitting your application:

1. I am ready to submit my claim, should I make an appointment to have it reviewed? Who do I call?

- It is a good idea to have someone review your documents and application to make sure they are completed before submitting. This can help avoid mistakes and allow your application to be processed more seamlessly.
- The RECA Patient Navigator is available, please call her at (928) 283-1802 for an appointment.

2. What if I live out of town?

- If needed, we can set up an appointment to do the claim review over the phone at (928) 283-1802.

3. Does it cost money to have your clinic help me with my claim?

- There is no charge to the claimant for our services.

4. Are there any specific instructions about mailing the application?

- We recommend you copy the entire application for your records and then mail the original by certified mail to the address below.
- You may also bring your entire application into the RECA office to be certified mail by our office at no charge.

5. Where do I mail the application to?

- Radiation Exposure Compensation Program
US Department of Justice
P.O. Box 146
Ben Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20044-0146

6. As a child filler, which sibling do we list as the claimant, and do we have to include any stepchildren?

- Any one of the children can be the lead child claimant. The lead child claimant is asked to identify, under penalty of perjury, every other child every born to the deceased parent and if they are alive, their contact information. All adopted and stepchildren should also be included in this list.

7. Are stepchildren included in the application and do they qualify for compensation? What if they were adults at the time of the marriage?

- Stepchildren qualify as claimants if their biological parent was married to the person who became ill, and they lived in a parental relationship. List the stepchildren's names, contact information and as much information regarding their relationship as possible. The DOJ will contact them to determine if they qualify or not.

8. As a child-filer, do I have all my sibling signatures before I submit?

- You should have as many of your living siblings sign page 18 of the application as possible. This will speed up your claim. You may copy this page if there are more than four siblings.
- If you are not able to contact them or they refuse to sign, write a letter explaining the circumstances and give their names. The DOJ will try to contact them.

9. What if I can't find my sibling or have no idea where they are living now?

- Submit the application with a letter listing their name and explaining the circumstances and the DOJ will attempt to contact them. This could slow the approval process down.

10. What if my sibling refuses to be included in the application process?

- When you submit the application, write a letter telling the DOJ the name and contact information for that sibling. The DOJ will attempt to contact them.
- If they refuse to be involved, the DOJ will adjudicate the claim for the other siblings and hold the refusing sibling's compensation portion in trust.

11. What can I expect to happen now that I have mailed my application?

- Shortly after you mail your claim, the DOJ will send a letter confirming receipt of it. The letter also will include a claim number and the name of the paralegal who is handling your case. Keep this letter so you have this information if you ever need it.

12. How long does it take the Department of Justice to let me know whether I am approved?

- The RECA law states that the DOJ has up to a year to make decision on your claim. It usually doesn't take that long.
- Self-filers usually hear within about 4-6 months.
- Other claimants can take longer. The time depends on circumstances at the DOJ and the number of people involved in the claim.

13. How long will it take for me to get the money?

- From when you send your acceptance letter back to the DOJ there is usually a 4-6-week turnaround time before the money comes from the Department of Treasury.

14. What can I do if I sent in my application, it has been pending for a very long time and I have haven't heard from the Department of Justice?

- You can call and leave a message for your specific claim examiner to call you back about your claim. If you don't hear from them, you can always call the RESEP office, and we can contact the DOJ for you.

15. I got a letter from the Department of Justice saying they need more information what do I do?

- Gather and submit the requested documents in the time they have given you. If you can't get the information they need before the deadline, write a letter asking for additional time.
- If you don't understand what the letter is saying, you can call the RESEP office to make an appointment to review letter. If more clarification is needed, we can contact the DOJ for you.

16. I was compensated previously for a qualifying cancer and now have been diagnosed with another cancer can I apply again?

- No, you can **only receive compensation one time for yourself**, even if you get diagnosed with another qualifying cancer after receiving compensation.

- You can, however, apply for someone else you qualify for (i.e., husband, spouse, parent, etc.).

Questions about once you are approved for compensation:

1. How long will it be until I know if I have been approved?

- By law the DOJ has one year to adjudicate your claim. Self-filers usually take less than 6 months. Other claimants can take a little longer.

2. I've received an approval letter. What do I need to do with it?

- Fill out and sign the acceptance form.
- Choose how you want your money to come, either a physical check or direct deposit.
- If you choose direct deposit, the last page of the acceptance form is the ACH vendor payment form, this must be taken to your bank. The bank representative will fill out the form with banking information for the Department of Treasury to electronically transfer the money.
- If you choose to receive a physical check, you do not have to return the ACH vendor payment form.
- Mail these forms back in the enclosed envelope by regular (**not certified**) mail.

3. The approval letter states if I sign, I give up the right to other possible benefits. Should I sign it?

- The extra benefits, managed by the Department of Labor (DOL) through the Energy Employee Occupational Illness Compensation Act (EEOICPA) program, **do not apply to most downwinders**.
- Unless the person who became ill worked at a certain Department of Energy (DOE) facilities, they do not qualify and **should accept the payment**.
- If you think they may have worked at a DOE facility, you may want to find out from DOL about what benefits they may qualify for before signing the acceptance of payment forms. They may qualify for more money through EEOICPA.
- If you still have questions about this process and whether you should sign, please contact either your claim examiner at the DOJ or call the RESEP office. We will try to get the answers.

4. The approval letter asked whether I would like the money in a check or direct deposit. Is one way faster than the other?

- Both physical check and direct deposits take about 4- 6 weeks for the money to arrive. Neither method is faster than the other.

5. If I choose direct deposit, do I need anything special with my bank or talk to someone?

- You must take the ACH vendor payment form to the bank and have them fill it out. This will provide the information that the department of treasury needs to electronically deposit the money.

6. How long will it take to get the money once I send in my acceptance form?

- It will take four to six weeks for the money to arrive.

7. Do I have to spend the compensation money on medical bills?

- You can choose to spend the money on whatever you want. It is not considered income.

8. What if the claimant was approved but dies before the money comes in?

- If the claimant dies before the money arrives in the bank electronically (or before the check is cashed), the family must let the DOJ know immediately. **Do not spend it**. When the check comes, it must be mailed back. Call the RESEP office and we will send you the new claim form and help you reapply.
- The family can then resubmit the claim in the name of the new claimant (either spouse or children).

9. Is this money taxable do I claim it on my income tax?

- No. The RECA compensation is not considered income. It is not taxable.

Questions about if you were denied compensation:

1. What happens if my claim is denied?

- By law you can reapply three more times. You must provide additional proof that the Department of Justice had requested from previous claim.

2. Can I appeal the denial decision? How do I do that?

- Yes, you can appeal the decision. You must write a letter explaining why you feel the decision was incorrect.
- Send the above appeal letter to:
 - Radiation Exposure Compensation Program
 - US Department of Justice
 - Appeals Attorney
 - P.O. Box 146
 - Ben Franklin station
 - Washington, DC 20044 – 00146
- Appeals will be decided within 90 days.

3. What more information do I need?

- You will need to provide any information the DOJ stated was missing from your previous claim.

4. How many times can I apply?

- Once you submit your initial claim, if that claim is denied, you may refile a maximum of three times.
- If you were denied because you didn't qualify and then are diagnosed with a qualifying cancer, you can apply again as long as you have not hit the 4th filing threshold.
- Claim submitted before July 10, 2000 do not count against the 4th filing limit.

Questions about getting your documents back:

1. How do I get my documents back once my claim is approved or denied?

- All original documents will be automatically returned to the claimant after the claim has been adjudicated.

2. What if I need the documents right away?

- You can write a letter to the Department of Justice stating that you need the documents as soon as possible and asking them to return them. Include your name and claim number (if possible) and explain why the records are needed. You must state your relationship to the claimant.
- Send letter to the following address:

Radiation Exposure Compensation Program
US Department of Justice
Attention: Vera Burnett-Powell
P.O. Box 146
Ben Franklin station
Washington, DC 20044 – 00146

3. It has been quite a while (months+) since I sent a letter and asked that my documents be sent back I have not heard from the DOJ. What do I do now?

- Either write again or call and leave a message for **Vera Burnett-Powell** at (202) 616-4336.
- You can also call the RESEP office, and we will contact Vera at the Department of Justice to see what is causing the delay, (928) 283-1802.