

Compensation for Miners

dti

Coal Health Claims

NEWSLETTER 11

AUGUST 2005

Fast Track Offers Go Live



- 450,000 payments made to miners, widows or families
- £2.6 billion paid to date
- 270,000 respiratory disease payments
- 180,000 Vibration White Finger payments
- Respiratory disease – £1.5 billion compensation paid to date
- Vibration White Finger – £1.1 billion compensation paid to date

A message from Malcolm Wicks, the Minister for Energy

After the last general election I took over responsibility for coal health claims from Nigel Griffiths. I wish to thank him for his hard work on ensuring compensation is paid to those eligible under the Department of Trade & Industry's two coal health schemes. As the new Minister, I will make sure miners and their families receive the compensation they are

entitled to. I also look forward to continuing and developing the speeding up of the respiratory disease process through the new fast track processes.

So far over 450,000 payments have been made providing miners and their families with £2.6 billion.

Malcolm Wicks announced on 21 July an external review of the DTI's administration of the former British Coal health schemes. For more information: www.dti.gov.uk/coalhealth/

Risk Offers

The Department is pleased to report that, as planned, the first risk offers were issued on 28 February 2005 to live mineworkers. As of the 14 August, a total of 39,356 fast track offers have been made of which there have been 29,521 acceptances.

Acceptances were expected to be in the region of 60%. To date, the acceptance rate has exceeded 90% within the 56 days in which a risk offer is open.

Since 21 February 2005, claims where Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is not mentioned on the death

certificate have had a temporary block applied to them. It is anticipated that widow and estate claimants will be able to opt-in for risk offers from September 2005. Offers will be confined to those claimants where there is no COPD on the death certificate.

The tariffs for the Deceased Risk Offer Scheme are £1,200 for widows and £1,000 for estates. Claimants should consult their solicitor as to whether they should consider such an offer. Claimants not wishing to opt in will retain the right to undergo a full medical assessment.



Respiratory Disease claims update

CLAIMS REGISTERED

- Some 610,000 claims were received before the cut off date, but this includes some potential duplicates which require verification.

CLAIMS SETTLED

- Progress continues to be made and we have now settled 226,000 of these claims in full.

MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS

- We have completed 264,000 medical assessments, some 80% of those claimants for whom we have received mandates and claims questionnaires.

DAMAGES PAID OUT

- We have now paid out a total of £1.5 billion in damages to claimants.

CUT-OFF DATE

- The Department is no longer accepting claims under the Respiratory Disease Scheme but it is possible to submit claims under the common law procedure. If you believe you may have a valid claim, you should contact a solicitor.

DAMAGES OFFERED BUT UNDER CONSIDERATION

- There are also around 27,000 offers under consideration by solicitors or claimants; this includes some offers which have been queried with Capita, the Department's claims handlers. DTI and the solicitors are working together to get these settled wherever possible.

SURFACE ONLY CLAIMS

- Miners with surface only exposure were not covered by the 1998 High Court judgment and are not therefore included under the Claims Handling arrangements. The Department's medical advice is that the levels of respirable dust (NOT visible dust) in surface jobs was not sufficient to cause lung disease. The miners' solicitors had been intending to contest this in new litigation but advised the court in December 2004 that they were not now going ahead with this. Any surface-only worker who feels they have a claim can pursue this in the normal way as a common law case. They should consult their solicitor.

VWF claims update

CLAIMS REGISTERED

- The number of claims registered is 170,000.

CLAIMS SETTLED

- We are making good progress and have now settled 106,000 of these claims in full.

INTERIM PAYMENTS

- We have made 99,000 interim payments.

DAMAGES PAID OUT

- We have now paid out the total sum of £1.1 billion in damages to claimants.

CUT-OFF DATE

- The Department is no longer accepting claims under the VWF Scheme but it is still possible to submit VWF claims under the common law procedure. If you believe you may have a valid claim, you should contact a solicitor.
- There were further cut-off dates of 31 January for Wage Loss claims, 31 March for live Services claims and 30 June 2005 for Group 3 claims.

SERVICES CLAIMS

- A separate agreement has been negotiated with the claimants' solicitors for claimants who need additional assistance in carrying out household tasks such as gardening and DIY.
- A separate medical is needed for this. By the end of June, approximately 15,800 examinations had been completed in total and nearly 10,900 offers for Services claims had been made

GROUP THREE CLAIMS

- Approximately 16,500 Group 3 claims have been submitted. The claimant's solicitors have subsequently withdrawn a number of these. Over 11,000 Group 3 investigations have been completed. There are approximately 2,600 claims where the investigation has not completed
- The Department is on track to largely complete the first-time investigation of Group 3 claims by the end of September 2005, where it is in their power to do so.

SCHEME CLOSURE

- The VWF scheme has been closed for over 2 years and the Department has formulated a programme for achieving final settlements for all remaining claims. To this end, it has challenged its contractors with a tight timetable by way of Aspirational Scheme End Dates that have been proposed to the claimants' solicitors.
- A procedure has been introduced to deal with claims that have been 'stuck' in the system for some time through inactivity on the part of the claimant or his representative. This stalled claims process has been endorsed by the Judge and re-started from 1 February for General Damages and on 13 June (for the first time) for Services claims.

THE TOP 30 CONSTITUENCIES FOR RESPIRATORY DISEASE AND VWF COMPENSATION

Constituency	Payments Made	Total Paid Out
Easington	13,090	£94m
Barnsley East And Mexborough	14,651	£86m
Hemsworth	12,903	£74m
Bolsover	13,909	£72m
Sherwood	13,772	£68m
Mansfield	11,759	£63m
Bassetlaw	10,524	£63m
Ashfield	12,246	£62m
Doncaster North	9,964	£61m
Merthyr Tydfil And Rhymney	7,811	£58m
Ogmore	7,803	£56m
Rhondda	7,331	£54m
Don Valley	8,967	£53m
Barnsley Central Boro	9,369	£53m
Cynon Valley	7,053	£53m
Wansbeck	8,086	£51m
Pontefract And Castleford	8,158	£47m
Caerphilly	6,634	£44m
Barnsley West And Penistone	7,997	£43m
Houghton And Washington East Boro	6,049	£42m
Islwyn	6,169	£39m
Rother Valley	6,718	£38m
Blaenau Gwent	6,098	£38m
Wentworth	6,623	£38m
Carrick, Cumnock & Doon Valley	5,345	£33m
North East Derbyshire	5,817	£29m
North Durham	4,025	£28m
Neath	4,104	£27m
Cannock Chase	4,772	£27m
Normanton	4,059	£25m

Main statistics August 2005

	RESPIRATORY	VWF
CLAIMS REGISTERED	579,000*	170,000
CLAIMS SETTLED IN FULL	226,000	84,000
INTERIM PAYMENTS	82,000	99,000
TOTAL DAMAGES PAID	£1.5bn	£1.1bn

* Excludes minimal information claims which need to be verified as not duplicate claims

Further Information

- For more detailed information and a breakdown of damages by constituency and region please go to www.dti.gov.uk/coalhealth
- For information on an individual claim please contact your solicitor
- Solicitors can access information on individual claims at www.coalclaims.com

