

F-111 SHOAMP HEALTH CARE SCHEME

INFORMATION FOR HEALTH CARE/MEDICAL PROVIDERS

Introduction

The SHOAMP Health Care Scheme provides treatment and counselling services for workers who were involved in the fuel tank maintenance of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) F-111 aircraft. This information leaflet provides an overview and background information on the F-111 deseal/reseal fuel tank maintenance programs and the SHOAMP Health Care Scheme.

The F-111 aircraft

The F-111 is one of the RAAF's strike and reconnaissance aircraft. It is supersonic and capable of flying long distances at low altitudes. The aircraft has many fuel tanks, all with no fuel bladders. The tanks were sealed with chemical sealant compounds and required significant and on-going repair work from the outset of deployment.

Fuel tank sealant deterioration and leakage appeared to be a result of normal operating

stresses and sealant lining the walls of the fuel tanks reacting with jet fuel.

Fuel tank repair processes involved workers entering the F-111 fuel tanks to remove the sealant lining, using powerful solvents and water jets, and then finishing the task by hand with dental picks. Once cleaned, the tanks were pre-treated and then resealed. A range of chemicals and solvents were used.

Formal deseal/reseal and ad hoc fuel tank maintenance programs were undertaken between 1973 and 2000 to maintain the F-111 fuel tanks. Other workers were involved in burning the by-products of fuel tank repair and maintenance.

What chemicals were used?

A wide variety of chemicals was used in the programs. Some of the combinations of chemicals were designed specifically for use in the F-111 fuel tanks. Others, such as jet fuel, have a very wide range of applications in military and civilian life.

It should also be noted that the specific chemicals used in the programs changed over time. In the later years, the chemicals were not the same as those used when the program commenced.

How has involvement in the F-111 programs affected workers?

An epidemiological study was undertaken by the University of Newcastle in 2004 to examine

the health of F-111 workers against two comparison groups from RAAF Base Amberley and RAAF Base Richmond. The study of health outcomes in aircraft maintenance personnel (SHOAMP) found an association between participation in the programs and several health conditions, including:

- Depression and anxiety;
- Erectile dysfunction;
- Lower physical and mental quality of life;
- Self-reported memory problems; and
- Cancer (on the balance of probabilities).

The study also found a weaker association with a range of other conditions including dermatitis, obstructive lung disease and neuropsychological deficits.

What benefits and services are available to eligible workers?

Following from the epidemiological study, the Government has established a range of services for F-111 workers:

- an ex-gratia scheme which provides lump sum payments for certain eligible workers;
- compensation for specified health conditions;
- the Better Health Program which provides cancer screening (colorectal cancer and melanoma) and health information for the F-111 workers; and
- the SHOAMP Health Care Scheme to provide treatment for conditions while compensation claims are being investigated and determined (and in some cases funding for treatment will continue after the claim is rejected).

The SHOAMP Health Care Scheme

The SHOAMP Health Care Scheme is administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and funds treatment costs for a range of health conditions that might be reasonably related to the F-111 programs.

What conditions are covered under the SHOAMP Health Care Scheme?

The SHOAMP Health Care Scheme can pay for the treatment of the following conditions for eligible participants:

- Skin rashes and associated systemic conditions
 - Dysplastic naevus
 - Eczema/dermatitis
- Neurological conditions
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Parkinson's disease
 - Peripheral neuropathy
 - Spinal muscular atrophy
 - Erectile dysfunction
 - Cauda equina syndrome
 - Neurogenic bladder
 - Non-alcoholic toxic encephalopathy
 - Acquired colour vision deficiency
- Mental disorders and personality changes
 - Depression
 - Sleep disorders with neurological basis
 - Bi-polar affective disorder
 - Vertigo
 - Memory loss
 - Anxiety
 - Panic disorders

- Impaired cognition
- Alcohol and drug dependence
- Agoraphobia with panic disorder
- Malignant neoplasm and myeloproliferative disorders
- Liver diseases
 - Liver disease (excluding diabetes)
 - Pancreatic disease
- Gastrointestinal problems
 - Irritable bowel disorder
 - Ulcerative colitis / Crohn's disease
 - Diverticulitis
 - Bowel polyps
- Immunological disorders
 - Mixed connective tissue disease
 - Systemic lupus erythematosus
 - Sarcoidosis

Payment

The SHOAMP Health Care Scheme will cover all reasonable health costs for the treatment and management of any of the listed health conditions, including pharmaceuticals.

The SHOAMP Health Care Scheme does not cover the cost of investigating a condition.

Original Tax Invoices should clearly specify the condition/s being treated (as guided by the conditions listed in this leaflet).

The SHOAMP Health Care Scheme is administered separately from standard DVA compensation claims.

More information

DVA general enquiries:

- Metropolitan callers: 133 254
- Regional callers: 1800 555 254
- Email: generalenquiries@dva.gov.au