



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585



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MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

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SUBJECT: Public Safety Officer Benefits for NEST Responders

I am pleased to announce that effective immediately, the Department of Energy's emergency response personnel will now be covered under the Public Safety Officers' Benefit Act (PSOB), which was approved under the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act on January 1, 2021. This act will extend PSOB benefits to all members of the Nuclear Emergency Support Team (NEST), including federal employees, management and operations personnel, and service support contractors. The relevant updated legislative language reads as follows:

(F) an employee or contractor of the Department of Energy who—

(i) is—

(I) a nuclear materials courier (as defined in section 8331(27) of title 5, United States Code); or

(II) designated by the Secretary of Energy as a member of an emergency response team; and

(ii) is performing official duties of the Department, pursuant to a deployment order issued by the Secretary, to protect the public, property, or the interests of the United States by—

(I) assessing, locating, identifying, securing, rendering safe, or disposing of weapons of mass destruction (as defined in section 1403 of the Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1996 (50 U.S.C. 2302)); or

(II) managing the immediate consequences of a radiological release or exposure.

The Department of Justice administers the PSOB to provide death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders, as well as disability benefits to such officers who are severely injured in the line of duty. ***These benefits only cover NEST personnel during operational deployments.*** The PSOB provides a one-time benefit to eligible survivors of public safety officers whose death was the direct and proximate result of an injury sustained in the line of duty on or after September 29, 1976. PSOB also provides a one-time benefit to eligible public safety officers who were permanently and totally disabled as a result of a catastrophic injury sustained in the line of duty (i.e., responses to real-world emergencies vice exercises) on or after November 29, 1990. Additionally, the PSOB provides support for higher education to eligible spouses and children of public safety officers who died or were catastrophically disabled in the line of duty.

The current amount of the PSOB benefit is \$370,376 for eligible deaths and disabilities occurring on or after October 1, 2020. The current amount of the PSOB educational assistance benefit for one month of full-time attendance on or after October 1, 2020 is \$1,265.

Notably, the U.S. Code states that PSOB benefits “shall be in addition to any other benefit that may be due from any other source,” suggesting that the law is not intended solely to apply to public safety officers who do not have coverage through others means. Thus, NEST responders with separate insurance coverage will still qualify to receive PSOB benefits.

Current benefits information can be found on the PSOB web site: www.psob.gov. Additionally, the process for obtaining PSOB benefits is explained in detail on the following web site: <https://psob.bja.ojp.gov/benefits/>. This process involves the Employing Agency and an Authorized Agent. I recommend viewing this three-minute video for a quick overview of the application process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxvZuT4Nb4Q&feature=youtu.be>.

The effort to expand the definition of a “public safety officer” to include NEST personnel has been ongoing for nearly 10 years through close collaboration with our NNSA’s Office of the General Counsel and Congressional Affairs colleagues. This expanded PSOB coverage is yet another validation of NEST’s critical contributions to national security and public health and safety. I thank each of you for your dedication and commitment to the NEST mission.

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