

If you have any questions about this investigation, you and your relatives can ring our confidential freephone helpline, details of which are at the end of this leaflet.

The health and safety staff at NSUK will be available to advise current and former employees. If you wish to use this offer of support the telephone number is 01475 655444.

There is no need to consult your GP about the results of this study. However, as ever, if you have any specific concerns about your health, then you should contact your GP. All GPs and NHS Health Boards in Scotland have been informed about the findings of our investigation.

#### **WHAT WILL HSE DO NOW?**

HSE inspectors have already started discussions with NSUK to ensure that the necessary controls are in place and to consider if any additional precautions are necessary. We will carry out a fuller review in conjunction with management and worker representatives as soon as possible. This will be part of a full review of current working practices and controls in the semiconductor industry across Great Britain.

We will want to look more closely at the work done by the people who developed lung, stomach, breast and brain cancers. We will also gather as much information as we can about possible non-workplace factors. This should help towards finding out if there is any connection between the work being done and the risk of developing cancer.

We will need to speak to you and the NSUK management to explain how this research will be carried out and get agreement to it. We will also

seek ethical approval and ask the Scientific Steering Committee to monitor the work.

We will be giving very high priority to this work. We are not yet sure how long it will take but we will tell you more as these plans are developed. At the moment we think it would be completed within 12 months of the time when all the agreements are in place.

If these cancers are due to workplace factors, then we might expect to see similar findings in other semiconductor companies. Knowing whether or not this is the case would help everyone understand our findings better. Therefore, we will also be recommending to the rest of the industry in Great Britain that an industry-wide investigation of the same type as the one reported here should be undertaken. This investigation should also be done by independent investigators.

#### **HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?**

Copies of the technical report are available from NSUK management. The report can also be found on the HSE web site at:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/nsukrept.pdf>

Also, you and your family can ring the HSE's confidential freephone helpline.

#### **CONFIDENTIAL FREEPHONE HELPLINE**

**For information about the report and its findings, or for help and advice if you are worried, call:**

**0800 592450**

# **HSE investigation of concerns about cancer among current and former workers at National Semiconductor (UK) Ltd, Greenock**



## WHY WAS THE INVESTIGATION DONE?

Some people believe that working at National Semiconductor UK (NSUK) has caused an increased risk of cancer for people who have worked there.

There is very little scientific evidence about cancer risks in the semiconductor industry. So the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) decided to carry out an investigation.

The main aim was to establish - as quickly as possible - some facts about cancer in current and previous workers at NSUK. But we also made sure we could carry out a more detailed investigation if this was needed as a result of what we found.

Both the management and workers at NSUK agreed to co-operate with the investigation.

## HOW DID HSE CARRY OUT THE INVESTIGATION?

We agreed our plan with a group of independent Scottish experts (the Scientific Steering Committee) and the local medical research ethics committee.

NSUK provided information about current and former employees at the Greenock plant. We used this information to find out which workers had died or developed cancer since starting work at the plant.

We compared the number of cases and types of cancer that actually occurred within the Greenock workforce with the number and types of cancer that would be expected based on Scottish data.

## WHAT DID WE FIND AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The investigation covered about 4500 current and former employees, about equal numbers of men and women. For these people we found:

- The total number of women who have died (from all causes) is slightly fewer than expected; the number of men who have died is substantially fewer than expected.
- The total number of cancer cases in women and men is about the same as expected.
- There were 11 cases of lung cancer in women, two to three times as many as expected – a significant finding that raises the possibility of a work-related cause. However, some of the detailed findings for lung cancer argue against this possibility, and other factors unrelated to the workplace must be carefully considered as well. For instance information on smoking was not available to our investigation. Even so, we must treat this finding seriously.
- There were three cases of stomach cancer in women - four or five times as many as expected. Because of the small number of cases we are less confident of the significance of this finding. As with lung cancer, some of the detailed findings for stomach cancer argue against the possibility of workplace cause, and we have no information on other possible causes such as diet. However, we still cannot exclude the possibility of a work-related cause.
- There were two cases of lung cancer in men, about half as many as expected, and no cases of stomach cancer.

- There were 20 cases of breast cancer in women - about 1.3 times as many as expected (5 more actual cases than expected). A number of factors such as the age at which women first become pregnant can affect the risk of breast cancer. Further work is required before we can say anything more about this finding.
- There were three deaths from brain cancer in men - about four times as many as expected. There were four cases of brain cancer altogether. This is probably not work-related, but the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out.
- None of the other cancers we investigated produced any evidence of important excesses.

### In summary:

**The current findings, though inconclusive, reinforce concern about cancer in the workforce at NSUK in Greenock.**

**They raise the possibility of a work-related cause for some of these cancers, particularly lung cancer, but there is no proof that working at NSUK has caused an increased risk of employees developing cancer.**

**Further research is needed before we will be able to reach more definite conclusions about whether or not workplace factors are playing a role in causing some of the cancers that have occurred.**

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NOW?

You and your management should pay particular attention to following fully all of the health and safety rules and procedures necessary for your work.