

INFORMATION SHEET FOR GENERAL PUBLIC POSSIBLE LASER EXPOSURE FROM RAAF AIRCRAFT

WHAT HAPPENED?

On 28th May 2007 in vicinity of Myall Lake, near Forster NSW at 11.25am and 4.13pm, inadvertent exposure to Class Four Lasers from a military aircraft may have occurred to members of the public traveling in a small number of vehicles.

WHAT ARE CLASS FOUR LASERS?

Class Four Lasers are the most powerful lasers used by the RAAF, and utilize very tightly focused beams of high energy light.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF INJURY?

The risk of injury to the public is low and symptoms are typically easy to recognize and investigate. Worldwide documented cases of people on the ground being injured from airborne Lasers are rare. However, members of the public are being advised to seek medical advice if they are concerned that they may have been exposed.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LASER EXPOSURE

The risk of eye exposure to occupants of traveling vehicles from airborne laser is considered low. However, Class Four Lasers are the strongest laser, and can cause permanent eye damage to the retina at the back of the eye if inadvertent exposure occurs.

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS?

If eye exposure occurred, symptoms would be expected, and include glare, dazzle, a sudden bright flash (similar to a camera flash), and potentially pain and watering. Blurring and loss of vision may also be experienced; this could be temporary or permanent. Visual changes would depend on amount and location of injury, small changes may not be obvious without specialist eye assessment.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you consider that you may have been exposed, you should seek assessment from your local General Practitioner in the first instance, taking this Information Sheet with you.

If your doctor believes that you may have an eye injury secondary to Laser exposure, then you should be referred for specialist ophthalmologic assessment and follow up.

For further information, you can call Defence on 1800 000 655 for assistance or guidance as to the assistance available from Defence for specialist investigation.