

The “downwinders” program you’re asking about is part of the **Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA)**—and it’s especially important for New Mexicans because the law was **expanded in 2025** to finally include people affected by the **Trinity nuclear test (1945)**.

Here’s a clear breakdown of how it works for New Mexico residents 📌

What the program is

- RECA is a **federal compensation program** for people harmed by U.S. nuclear testing.
 - It provides **one-time payments (typically \$100,000)** to eligible individuals or their survivors.
 - It covers people who developed certain cancers due to radiation exposure.
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Big change for New Mexicans (2025 expansion)

- For decades, **New Mexico “downwinders” were NOT included** in the original 1990 law.
- In **July 2025**, Congress expanded RECA to include New Mexico residents affected by Trinity fallout.

👉 This is the first time many New Mexicans became eligible.

Basic eligibility for NM “downwinders”

To qualify, you generally must meet **ALL three categories**:

1) **Location + time requirement**

- Lived, worked, or went to school in **New Mexico**
 - For **at least 1 year**
 - During this period:
 - **September 24, 1944 – November 6, 1962**
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2) **Medical condition requirement**

You must have been diagnosed with a **covered cancer**, such as:

- Leukemia
- Thyroid, lung, breast, colon cancers
- Multiple myeloma, lymphoma, and others

👉 The law has a **specific list of qualifying diseases**—not every cancer qualifies.

3) **Proof requirements**

You’ll need documentation showing:

- Proof of residence (school, work, or living records)
 - Medical records confirming diagnosis
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Compensation

- Typically **\$100,000 lump-sum payment** (tax-free)
 - Survivors (spouse, children) can file if the person has passed away.
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Important deadline

- Claims must be filed by **December 31, 2027**



This is critical—after that, the program may end again.



Key nuances (important for NM residents)

- You **do NOT need to prove exact radiation exposure**—the law assumes exposure if you meet location/time criteria.
 - New Mexico eligibility applies to the **entire state**, not just certain counties (unlike some other states).
 - Many eligible people are **older adults or their families**, since exposure dates back to the 1940s–1960s.
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Bottom line

For New Mexicans, you may qualify as a “downwinder” if:

- You (or a family member) lived in NM during 1944–1962
- Developed a qualifying cancer
- Can document residence and diagnosis



And now—because of the 2025 expansion—you finally have access to compensation that wasn’t available before.