

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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Radiation from Savannah River Site Increasing Groups Call for New Inquiry into SRS

Today in Augusta, citizens groups from Georgia and South Carolina released new research on rising rates of radioactivity and radiosensitive disease near the Savannah River Site. Their findings: 1) radioactivity around SRS is increasing, 2) health impacts are getting worse, especially within 25 miles of SRS, and 3) during the last decade nearly 2,000 excess cases of disease and death have occurred in the region.

Joseph J. Mangano, MPH MBA and author of the report, said, "It appears that in the past decade, levels of most types of radioactivity at the Savannah River Site are rising, as are rates of radiosensitive diseases." Calling for a new level of inquiry into health impacts near SRS, Mangano added, "The Energy Department and local residents should work together to understand reasons why these are occurring as cleanup begins at the site." Mangano, who directs the Radiation and Public Health Project research group, added that he is willing to explain findings to public officials and community members who are concerned about SRS.

Charles Utley, SRS Campaign Coordinator for the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, lives in Augusta. He observed, "SRS has been studied for decades. But the surprising findings in this new report bring us a significant step closer to associating what we fear with what we know." Utley added, "The methodology developed here also holds promise for determining what is happening at other DOE sites across the nation."

Theresa El-Amin, Regional Project Director for the Southern Anti-Racism Network, said, "The people in this area have suffered for too long at the hands of an industry which does not value their lives enough to protect them." Referring to possible new nuclear projects at SRS, she warned, "We will not allow ourselves to be victims of another nuclear nightmare."

The S.C. Chapter of the Sierra Club has a long history of concern about

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environmental contamination and health issues related to the Savannah River Site. In a prepared statement, Susan Corbett, Chair of the South Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club and Chair of the National Sierra Club Nuclear Issues Activist Team, said, "New evidence and statistics by Dr. Mangano confirm our worst fears - that past, present and future activities at SRS result in major releases of long lived radionuclides that have negative health effects on local populations which last for many years."

Corbett continued, "Even as the industry tries to downplay the effects of radiation on human health by promoting specious theories like hormesis, researchers Mangano and others are finding more and more evidence of the devastating long term effects of radiation in our environment." She said that the goal of the Sierra Club is to promote the rapid cleanup of SRS and to halt any new missions that produce more radioactive waste or allow further releases of radiation into the environment.

Mel Jenkins, Executive Director of Environmentalists, Inc., said, "Whether the immediate issue is nuclear or other potential dangers, our goals have remained the same: Demand full truth and safety for the public and the environment, research and reveal, reach out and care." Jenkins added, "Environmentalists, Inc. is proud to support this project, to stand with the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and others." For 40 years, Environmentalists, Inc. has been one of the South's long-term action and information organizations.

The regional Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, the Southern Anti-Racism Network, the South Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club and Environmentalists, Inc., presented the results of the study. Louis Zeller, Executive Director for the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, said that the groups plan to work together to bring message to communities throughout the region.

Today's findings are the result of a yearlong investigation by the Radiation and Public Health Project which also did the "Baby Tooth" study. RPHP was founded by Dr. Jay Gould in 1985. During the first half century of the Nuclear Age a growing body of medical and scientific evidence has emerged to demonstrate a probable causal link between low-level internal radiation from the ingestion of man-made fission products and world-wide increases in immune deficiency diseases, especially cancer and those affecting the newborn. Radiation and Public Health Project has assembled much of the epidemiological evidence documenting these links.

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