
Three Mile Island Alert

The Newsletter of Three Mile Island Alert

November 1996

Researchers Find Evidence of High Doses of Radiation Following 1979 TMI Accident

from August 26, 1996, Cancer Weekly Plus

Scientists at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) have found what they believe is evidence that exposure to high doses of radiation shortly after the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island increased cancer among Pennsylvanians downwind of the plant. Dr. Steven Wing, UNC-CH School of Public Health, led a study of cancer cases within ten miles of the facility from 1975 to 1985. He and his colleagues concluded that following the accident that began March 28, 1979, lung cancer and leukemia rates were five to ten times higher downwind of the Three Mile Island reactor than upwind.

"I would be the first to say that our study doesn't prove by itself that there were high-level radiation exposures, but it is part of a body of evidence that is consistent with high exposures," Wing said. "If you say that there was no high radiation, then you are left with higher cancer rates downwind of the plume that are otherwise unexplainable."

Wing presented his group's findings at the International Workshop on

Radiation Exposures by Nuclear Facilities, held at the University of Portsmouth in Portsmouth, United Kingdom, in July 1996. Co-authors of the report were Dr. Douglas Crawford-Brown, Dr. Donna Armstrong and David Richardson, all at UNC-CH.

The study involved re-analyzing data from a 1990 Columbia University study that concluded the nation's worst civilian nuclear accident was not responsible for slightly increased cancer rates near the plant because radiation exposures were too low. Wing and colleagues felt the earlier study was flawed and redid it using what they believed were better analytic and statistical techniques.

"Several hundred people at the time of the accident reported nausea, vomiting, hair loss and skin rashes, and a number said their pets died or had symptoms of radiation exposure," he said. "We figured that if that were possible, we ought to look at it again. After adjusting for pre-accident cancer incidence, we found a striking association between

the area believed to be downwind and increased cancers." He and his colleagues do not believe smoking and social and economic factors were responsible for the increased cancers found in the downwind sectors.

Most earlier researchers, as well as government and industry officials, have accepted as fact that only small amounts of radiation were released into the atmosphere, Wing said. But it is known that plant radiation monitors went off scale when the accident started. One or more plumes containing higher radiation could have passed undetected, he said.

Findings from the re-analysis of cancer incidence around Three Mile Island is consistent with the theory that radiation from the accident increased cancer in areas that were in the path of radioactive plumes, the scientist said. "This cancer increase would not be expected to occur over a short time in the general population unless doses were far higher than what was expected by

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Three Mile Island Alert

Three Mile Island Alert (TMIA) is a non-profit citizens' organization dedicated to the promotion of safe-energy alternatives to nuclear power, especially the Three Mile Island nuclear plant.

Formed in 1977 after the construction and licensing of TMI Unit-1 and the construction of the infamous Unit-2, TMIA is the largest and oldest safe-energy group in central Pennsylvania.

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TMI's Engineering and Plant Support Slip in SALP Report

from a September 16, 1996, NRC Press Release

Three Mile Island Unit 1 has received performance ratings of "superior" in operations and maintenance and "good" in engineering and plant support in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) of the facility.

NRC assessment reports rate licensees in four functional areas - plant operations, engineering, maintenance and plant support - and assign Category 1, 2 or 3 depending on whether their performance in those areas was superior, good or adequate. In a letter to GPU, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller, said, "Overall, the NRC continued to observe good safety performance at the Three Mile Island Plant, Unit 1. Performance continued to be strong in the Maintenance area and improved performance was noted in the Operations area; however, performance declined in the areas of Engineering and Plant Support due in part to poor management oversight of program implementation in several areas."

Mr. Miller has these comments on Three Mile Island's performance in engineering and plant support:

ENGINEERING

Engineering communications and planning have remained strengths.

The quality of design change activities and engineering's response to technical issues declined from the last SALP in that it varied significantly. Engineering performance in programmatic activities also declined. Performance in design basis documentation and updated final safety analysis report (UFSAR) updating programs was very good; however, performance in oversight of the motor-operated valve testing program exhibited significant weaknesses.

PLANT SUPPORT

The radiation protection program was effectively implemented, including successful performance noted in review of ALARA program results. However, some radiation worker performance issues were noted in adhering to high radiation area controls and contamination monitoring. Security performance declined as indicated by two occurrences involving problems with maintaining the integrity of protected area barriers. The emergency preparedness program performance was good; however, performance during the last full participation exercise was mixed.

Victory for Environmentalists! CONGRESS GOES HOME

from October 1996, The Nuclear Monitor (NIRS Newsletter)

It was described as the "most anti-environmental Congress in history."

The Republican "revolution" began in January 1995 with a full-scale attempt to roll back environmental regulations and cut environmental programs. Industry lobbyists crowded Capitol Hill hallways and offices, not just offering their views but actually writing the legislation.

The Nuclear Energy Institute confidently asserted that a bill to create an "interim" storage site for high-level radioactive waste would be passed and signed by Christmas 1995. Proposed "low-level" waste dumps at Ward Valley, California and Sierra Blanca, Texas would clear their last hurdles.

It didn't turn out quite that way.

Instead, as Congress limped toward adjournment in late September, a startling realization occurred: a combination of circumstance, conservative over-reaching, and firm veto threats from President Clinton resulted in the worst Congressional session for the nuclear power industry ever.

When the dust had cleared and the last Member had left town, environmentalists' jeers had turned to cheers.

Mobile Chernobyl Act

The centerpiece of the nuclear

industry's legislative initiatives: interim storage of waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada--popularly known as the "Mobile Chernobyl Act"--never even reached the House floor for a vote.

After the Senate passed Mobile Chernobyl July 31 without enough votes to override a presidential veto, the Nuclear Energy Institute engaged in an estimated \$1.5 million campaign to try to force Clinton to change his mind. The effort was concentrated in key election battlegrounds like Michigan, Illinois and Iowa, and at the Democratic National Convention.

But the campaign, which generated thousands of phone calls to the White House, had no effect. At the end, without the votes to override a Presidential veto, the House leadership meekly wrote to President Clinton and asked if he still planned to veto the bill. For the fifth time, Clinton reaffirmed his intention to veto Mobile Chernobyl.

And that was it. The House leadership called bill opponent Rep. John Ensign (R-Nev.) and told him they were pulling the bill (HR 1020, Upton, R-Mich.) from the floor.

It hadn't been easy: defeating Mobile Chernobyl had required heroic efforts from Nevada Senators Richard Bryan and Harry Reid, President Clinton's unwavering resolve to veto the bill, and, most

importantly, the work of thousands of grassroots activists across the country who realized what many Congressmembers at first did not: that moving high-level radioactive waste across the country, to a "temporary" site, was dangerous to all Americans, and benefited only the nuclear industry.

Far from consolidating waste at one spot, as the industry claimed, citizens quickly realized that implementation of "interim" storage would merely add one more waste dump to the 110 nuclear reactors still generating waste. And with 50 million Americans living within one-half mile of likely transport routes, the stakes for public safety were much higher than Congress had considered at the beginning of the session.

Ward Valley & Sierra Blanca

The end of the session sparked a new effort by Senate Energy Committee Chairman Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) to force the transfer of federal land to California for the proposed Ward Valley "low-level" radioactive waste dump.

Murkowski tried twice to put such legislation in other bills, but both times a threatened filibuster by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and a threatened veto from President Clinton stopped the measure.

Meanwhile, establishment of a

(Continued on page 7)

Thermal Science Fined \$900,000 For "Deliberate Misconduct" On Thermo-Lag Statements

from October 1996, The Nuclear Monitor (NIRS Newsletter)

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission October 1 fined Thermal Science, Inc. (TSI) \$900,000 for "deliberately providing inaccurate or incomplete information to the NRC concerning TSI's fire endurance and ampacity testing programs." TSI manufacturers the controversial Thermo-Lag fire barrier, declared "inoperable" by the NRC in 1992.

It was the second-largest fine in agency history, and by far the largest for a contractor. The NRC issued nine rarely-invoked Severity Level I violations to TSI. The standard fine for a contractor for such a violation is \$10,000 per violation. But the NRC instead levied its statutory maximum of \$100,000 for each violation "in order for TSI to understand the magnitude of NRC concern that TSI's actions are unacceptable for a licensee contractor and to provide TSI an appropriate incentive to ensure that it provides the NRC complete and accurate information in the future"

According to a October 1 letter from James Lieberman, Director of NRC's Office of Enforcement, TSI in writing and in oral statements made by its president, Rubin Feldman, submitted "inaccurate and/or incomplete information" about tests conducted on its Thermo-Lag fire barrier. The inaccurate statements began in October 1991 and continued

through August 1992, according to the letter.

Wrote Lieberman, "These misrepresentations include statements by TSI that 1) Thermo-Lag products had been subjected to independent testing; 2) TSI had no knowledge of deviations from its installation procedures; and 3) Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) had total control of ampacity testing performed at UL facilities and that these test results were the 'most conservative data' available to TSI.

Contrary to TSI's representations, the NRC's review has determined that: (1) Thermo-Lag product test was actually performed by TSI with only minimal involvement of ITL [Independent Testing Laboratories]; (2) TSI had knowledge of installation deviations occurring at licensee facilities; and (3) the ampacity derating tests performed at UL were not under the total control of UL and the data presented by TSI concerning these tests was not 'the most conservative data' available to TSI."

The charges are similar, though at least in some cases not identical, to those prosecuted by the Justice Department in a criminal trial of TSI and Rubin Feldman last year. Both were acquitted of those charges.

Trial observers believed that a key reason for the acquittal was the NRC's failure to order the material

removed and replaced from the nation's reactors. After all, if the NRC thought the barrier was so bad why didn't they remove it. If it was good enough to still be used, then why prosecute the company, seemed to be the jury's reasoning.

In a written statement, TSI said it will contest the fine, and noted that "since the trial, the NRC has continued to approve the use of Thermo-Lag in nuclear plants." TSI will first appeal the fine to the NRC staff, then the Commissioners, and then likely in court.

At one point, Thermo-Lag was used as a primary fire barrier in some 79 reactors. However, a number of utilities have either removed the material or taken other measures, so that 46 reactors are now still relying on Thermo-Lag for their fire barriers.

[Ed note: Officials at GPUN, which operates Three Mile Island, said the plant still has 2,600 linear feet of Thermo-Lag. Following a July 1993 order by the NRC, TMI began roving fire watches, having people walk around the plant looking for fires.]

NIRS, which first filed a petition calling for the removal of Thermo-Lag in mid-1992, repeated its demand that the material be removed and replaced from all the nation's reactors immediately.

(Continued on page 6, column 2)

New Jersey's Salem -1 Tops List of Nuclear Lemons

from an Oct. 9, 1996, Public Citizen Press Release

Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project (CMEP) today charged the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) with callous disregard for public health and safety. The advocacy group says the NRC has failed to identify many of the most troubled nuclear reactors in the nation, and has failed to improve the performance of those problem reactors it has identified. The charges are detailed in *Nuclear Lemons*, a new CMEP report which lists the twenty-five worst nuclear reactors in the nation.

"The NRC's attempts to improve performance at troubled nuclear reactors have been an abysmal failure," said James Riccio, staff attorney for Public Citizen and primary author of the study.

Nuclear Lemons determines the worst commercial nuclear reactors based on twelve safety, economic and performance indicators. The rankings, which are being co-released with citizens groups across the country, are based entirely on statistics garnered from government and industry documents.

While the NRC keeps a "watch list" of problem plants, the agency has never explained the criteria used to create the list, or spelled out conditions to indicate when a reactor should be permanently closed. "The NRC identifies its problem plants," said Joan Claybrook, President of Public Citizen, "but the Commission has no established standards by which to judge when a nuclear reactor should be shut down. With so many aging,

deteriorating nuclear facilities threatening public health and safety, the NRC should be closing the most dangerous plants and moving aggressively to improve the remaining reactors."

"Increasing competition in the electric power industry threatens the survival of many nuclear plants that are far more expensive to operate and maintain than other sources of power," said Bill Magavern, Director of Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project. "Instead of looking the other way, the NRC needs to keep a much closer watch on nuclear

utilities, which will be tempted to shortchange safety in their efforts to cut costs. And these nuclear lemons deserve the most scrutiny."

To receive regular alerts on energy policy through the Internet, sign up for the Critical Mass listserver by sending the following message to: listproc@essential.org

SUBSCRIBE CMEP-LIST Your Name - Organization (no acronyms) - Home state
The Critical Mass Energy Project world wide web site is located at: <http://www.essential.org/CMEP>.

25 WORST REACTORS OVERALL

#	REACTOR	STATE	UTILITY
1	Salem-1	NJ	Public Service Electric & Gas
2	Wash. Nuclear-2	WA	Washington PPSS
3	Millstone-2	CT	Northeast Utilities Service
4	River Bend-1	LA	Gulf States Utilities
5	Dresden-3	IL	Commonwealth Edison
6	Quad Cities-2	IL	Commonwealth Edison
7	Sequoyah-1	TN	Tennessee Valley Authority
8	Salem-2	NJ	Public Service Electric & Gas
9	South Texas-1	TX	Houston Lighting & Power
10	Perry-1	OH	Cleveland Electric Illuminating
11	Cooper Station	NE	Nebraska Public Power
12	LaSalle-1	IL	Commonwealth Edison
13	Dresden-2	IL	Commonwealth Edison
14	Fitzpatrick	NY	New York Power Authority
15	Fermi-2	MI	Detroit Edison
16	Millstone-1	CT	Northeast Utilities Service
17	South Texas-2	TX	Houston Lighting & Power
18	Haddam Neck	CT	Northeast Nuclear Energy
19	Indian Point-3	NY	New York Power Authority
20	Quad Cities-1	IL	Commonwealth Edison
21	Palisades	MI	Consumers Power
22	Brunswick-1	NC	Carolina Power and Light
23	Pilgrim-1	MA	Boston Edison
24	Sequoyah-2	TN	Tennessee Valley Authority
25	Zion-1	IL	Commonwealth Edison

("Cancer Study" Continued from page 1)

industry and government authorities," Wing said. "Rather, our findings support the allegation that the people who reported rashes, hair loss, vomiting and pet deaths after the accident were exposed to high level radiation and not only suffering from emotional stress."

The UNC-CH scientist said he found it ironic that U.S. District Court Judge Sylvia Rambo threw out more than 2,000 damage claims filed against the power plant by nearby residents in July 1996 citing a "paucity of proof" to support their cases. "Judge Rambo spent a year or more throwing out scientific evidence presented by the plaintiffs," he said. "After she threw out the evidence that people had been injured by the accident, including our work, then she ruled that there wasn't enough to proceed with the case."

He also found it odd that the court gave attorneys for the nuclear industry the right to review the earlier health effects research before it was made public. "I think our findings show there ought to be a more serious investigation of what happened after the Three Mile Island accident," Wing said.

Limitations of the study, like the earlier work, include the continuing difficulty of determining precise wind direction for several days following the accident. The UNC-CH researchers used information supplied by the Columbia scientists in the re-analysis.

("Thermo-Lag" Continued from page 4)

Said Paul Gunter, Director of NIRS' Reactor Watchdog Project, "The NRC has now fined the company for lying about its product's quality but all that has been done by the industry and the regulator is to paper over the problem. As long as the NRC and the utilities have been aware of this problem, they have only been able to generate stacks of paper that would really be more effective as a fire barrier than Thermo-Lag itself.

"The NRC should have ordered this combustible material removed and replaced years ago," continued Gunter. "Because of a multimillion-dollar price tag to remove Thermo-Lag and replace it with a fire barrier that works, the nuclear utilities have successfully stalled any effective action to protect the public in the event of fire."



Coalition States Excluded from Radioactive Waste Lawsuit

from September 9, 1996, (Harrisburg) Patriot-News

Opponents of Pennsylvania's legislation to create a low-level nuclear waste site for itself and three other states scored a minor victory by keeping a coalition of states out of the case.

The Appalachian States Low-Level Radioactive Waste Commission, representing Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia wanted to be part of the suit that contends the Pennsylvania legislature violated the state constitution with shortcuts it took to adopt the law.

At issue in the lawsuit is whether the Legislature followed proper procedure in passing Act 12 of 1988, in which the commonwealth agreed to host the waste site and join the commission.

Commonwealth Court Senior Judge Silvestri Silvestri ruled that the original state defendants - Treasurer Catherine Baker Knoll, Governor Tom Ridge, and the commonwealth itself - were sufficient to represent the interests of the commission.

Gene Stilp and Eric Epstein of Harrisburg, two long-time anti-nuclear activists and members of TMIA, filed the suit. They are joined by Thomas Linzey of Shippensburg.

(Continued from page 3)

Texas/Maine/Vermont compact, which requires Congressional approval, also stalled. The House overwhelmingly defeated an effort to approve the compact in 1995.

Since then, compact supporters had been attempting to marshal enough votes to try again. Apparently, they failed, as the matter was also left hanging at the end of the session.

Changing Priorities

Nuclear research and development funding took a big hit this Congress, as coalitions of environmentalists and budget-cutters took aim at nuclear pork-barrel projects.

In 1995, Congress eliminated the wasteful gas-cooled reactor program (now General Atomics, which relied virtually entirely on government spending for its gas-cooled reactor program as no U.S. utilities expressed meaningful interest in the project, is trying to sell the idea to Russia for use as a plutonium-burning reactor).

This year, in the industry's only victory of the Congress, the Advanced Light Water Reactor (ALWR) narrowly survived extinction. But DOE officials reportedly have said that the administration will seek to end that program entirely next year.

Ken Bossong of the Sustainable Energy Coalition reported October 3 that nuclear programs took \$18.6 million in cuts from FY 96 to FY 97

(and FY 96 was cut from the previous year). \$11.6 million was cut from nuclear fusion programs, \$5 million from pyroprocessing and \$2 million from the ALWR.

Meanwhile, energy efficiency and renewables programs were increased by \$11.4 million from last year, for a total shift away from nuclear and toward sustainable energy programs of \$30 million--a welcome trend.

The Next Congress

It's probably too early to make any solid predictions about what nuclear-related legislation the next Congress may consider.

But at least a few things are clear: first, the nuclear industry will be back, pushing some form of radioactive waste legislation. Rep. Upton already has promised the industry that he will re-introduce an "interim" storage bill at the beginning of the next Congress.

Second, whether Democrats or Republicans control the House seems irrelevant: support for "interim" storage and opposition to Nevada seems likely to continue. If Republicans win, Rep. Thomas Bliley (R-Va.) seems likely to return as the House Commerce Committee chair; if the Democrats win, Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), who has clashed with Nevada's Democratic Senators in the past, likely will return as Chair.

A key question will be whether, if

"interim" storage legislation is passed, President Clinton will maintain his veto posture in a non-election year. The Nuclear Energy Institute industry already has accused the President of issuing his veto threat solely to win Nevada's five electoral votes, and predicts that he will sign a bill next session.

Still, the industry's defeat this Congress, and the growing public opposition to "interim" storage and unnecessary radioactive waste transportation, may lead Congress to consider different alternatives. And environmentalists are likely to be in a stronger position to influence the debate than they were at the beginning of this Congress.

"Low-level" waste legislation may also receive Congressional attention next session, but by far the biggest subject Congress will tackle is utility deregulation. This will take a lot of Congressional time and energy, and its impact on the future of the nuclear power industry and the drive for sustainable energy could be substantial.

Chernobyl Danger
from September 30, 1996, The (Harrisburg) Patriot-News

A sudden rise in radioactivity at Ukraine's damaged Chernobyl nuclear power station was caused by a limited chain reaction inside the entombed facility, according to government officials. About 100 tons of nuclear fuel remain inside the plant, but no decision has been made on how to remove it. There are plans, however, to strengthen the sarcophagus that was hastily erected after the 1986 explosion.

LET US

CELEBRATE!

THE UNITED NATIONS HAS PASSED A TREATY (158-3) TO HAVE ALL NATIONS STOP TESTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

ON SEPTEMBER 24, THE PRESIDENT SIGNED THE TREATY FOR THE U.S. OTHER NATIONS HAVE ALSO TAKEN THIS FIRST STEP TO END THE NUCLEAR AGE!

JOIN US

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1996
PENBROOK UCC
56 BANKS STREET, HARRISBURG



5:30 PM POTLUCK SUPPER. BRING A DISH TO SHARE.
SALAD - HOT DISH - OR DESSERT
6:30 PM A PROGRAM OF SONG....MUSIC....AND DANCE



YOU WILL BE WELCOMED BY MEMBERS OF THE SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:
Harrisburg Center for Peace & Justice; Harrisburg Friends Meeting; Harrisburg-Hiroshima-Nagasaki Cmte; Hershey-Harrisburg Chapter Physicians for Social Responsibility; Interfaith Peace Cmte of Greater Harrisburg; International Students at HAAC; Market Square Church Peacemaking Cmte; People for Peace; Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Harrisburg; St. Theresa's Cmte for Social Justice; Unitarian Cmte for Peace & Global Understanding; United Nations Association of Central Pennsylvania; Women's International League for Peace & Freedom.

For information: Irene Bernstein, 238-1711; Emogene Trexel, 234-4202.

News Notes:

- ◆ The TMIA Planning Council meets Thursday, November 14, 1996, at 7 pm at the TMIA office, 315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg. All members are welcome.
- ◆ TMIA is again offering the Syracuse Cultural Workers' calendar. The 1997 edition is entitled "Carry It On." This 26th edition of the internationally acclaimed celebration of art,

activism and community includes the Maestrapeace mural in San Francisco, the Million Man March, Chiapas, and a memorial sculpture to the Pan Am 103 bombing victims. You can pick one up at the TMIA office for \$10, or we'll gladly mail it to you upon receipt of your check or money order for \$11. To pick up a calendar, or for more information, call Kay Pickering at the TMIA office at 717-233-7897.

- ◆ Once again, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission is sponsoring "Be Winterwise" Utility Fairs. The fairs will offer valuable information on conservation, weatherization, and utility assistance programs. Workshops on electric competition and telephone education will be held throughout the day of the fair. Here is the time and date of the Harrisburg fair. **Where:** Heinz Senior Center, Fourth Street, Harrisburg, **When:** Friday, November 15, 10 am - 2 pm.



Please renew your TMIA membership

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Zip _____

- Membership: \$20 Regular Member \$50 Sustaining Member
 \$25 Non-Profit Org \$100 Patron
 \$5 Low Income/Student \$200 Club Member \$10 Newsletter only

Intervention Fund Contribution: \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100
 Checks of \$50 or more can be made payable to the TMI Legal Fund for tax deduction purposes.

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inside...

**Researchers Find Evidence of High Doses
of Radiation Following 1979 TMI Accident**

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