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Does Living Near Operating Reactors Cause Childhood Cancers

Nuclear regulators don't want you to know

By Cindy Folkers, Beyond Nuclear

More than 60 studies have shown increases of childhood leukemia around nuclear facilities worldwide. Despite this finding, there has never been independent analysis in the US examining connections between childhood cancer and nuclear facilities. The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) had directed the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to conduct such a study, but then withdrew funding, claiming publicly that it would be too expensive.

In fact, documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) reveal that NRC employees had already determined the study would show no impact. Internal emails indicate that staff was presupposing a conclusion for which they had no evidence, demonstrated by statements like "even if you found something that looked like a relationship [between cancer and radiation], you wouldn't know what to attribute it to," and "most people realize that all the evidence shows you're not going to find anything." The evidence, however, had not yet been fully collected and examined.

And studies in Europe found elevated rates of leukemia among children 5 and under living near nuclear power plants.

Not protective and unaccountable

While the NRC claims it protects public health, its radiation exposure standards fail to account fully for:
- impacts on the placenta
- impacts on fetal blood forming cells
- impacts on fetal and embryonic organs
- estrogenic impacts
- disproportionate impacts on women
- genetic impacts after the second generation
- cumulative damage of repeated radiation exposure

NRC exposure data and computer modeling is designed to demonstrate compliance with the NRC's regulations, but not to assess health impacts. The NRC has already stated numerous times that it believes low doses of radiation, the kind NRC claims its licensees are allowed to release, pose risks so low that health impacts may not be discernible. We don't know if NRC's claims of no discernible or attributable public health impact from nuclear power are actually true since no one has ever looked properly.

Pregnant women

Pregnancy and unborn children are the most vulnerable to serious damage from radiation exposure. Studies in Germany and France show an association between operating nuclear facilities and childhood cancer. However, given the demonstrable bias of the US NRC toward low doses having no health impact, it is essential that a US study go forward under the auspices of outside, independent experts, in order to examine what is happening in the US.

Ground-breaking study plans were threat to current health assumptions

Under the original and now canceled study, the NRC had tasked the NAS to use the most advanced methods in order to update the study the NRC currently uses to claim its reactors are safe. That

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NUKEWATCH QUARTERLY

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News & Information on Nuclear Weapons, Power, Waste & Nonviolent Resistance

Nukewatch Delegation Joins Resistance to US H-bombs in Germany

Sixteen of 18 nuclear abolitionists who conducted a mass "go-in" protest at the Büchel Air Force Base in Germany July 15 pose at the base's south entrance upon being released by the military. The 18, including activists from the US, Germany, The Netherlands and the UK—one in a wheel chair and another on crutches—gained entry by clipping through perimeter fences and razor wire in five separate places, in broad daylight, on a Sunday morning to bring attention to US hydrogen bombs deployed there, and to highlight the lax security surrounding nuclear weapons systems. One regional daily paper asked: "How could this happen?" Photo: Rolf Schlesener.

By Felice and Jack Cohen-Joppa

The demand of many Germans to rid their country of US nuclear weapons was again manifest by a 20-week-long series of protests at the Büchel Air Force Base in the Moselle River valley. The sponsoring group, Büchel is Everywhere: Nuclear Weapons-Free Now!, is a nationwide coalition of 50 peace and justice groups dedicated to nonviolent civil resistance for nuclear abolition. Groups are invited to take responsibility for blockades and other creative protests during particular weeks, while camping on a plot of land next to the base, purchased five years ago by the coalition.

"Civil disobedience is forced on us because the government pays no attention to polite requests for dialogue or to petitions for a nuclear-free Germany. Major social changes, like the ousting of U.S. nuclear missiles from Europe in the 1980s, all require civil resistance to finally be accomplished," said Marion Küpker, international coordinator for Büchel Is Everywhere!

As they did last year, Wisconsin-based Nukewatch brought a delegation of American nuclear abolitionists to join International Week at the camp, to demand that the small arsenal of US nuclear weapons stockpiled for NATO use at Büchel be sent back home.

After extensive planning in public meetings, and in broad daylight on Sunday, July 15, eighteen people—seven

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