

No Accident: Japan's Wastewater Dump

continued from Page 1

The nuclear industry and its government protectors manage this legalized dispersal of gaseous, liquid and solid radioactive wastes using bailouts, bribes, and winks, and approvals from captured regulatory agencies. Radioactive polluters also depend on the lengthy "latency period" — years or decades between one's radioactive contamination and the appearance of cancer, heart disease, etc. — which produces untold numbers of victims the world over. The nuclear industry can depend on the fact that the odds of losing a radiation damage lawsuit are between a slim chance and a fat chance.

The British Medical Journal, on August 16, published news of yet another study that has found that exposure to low levels of radiation is more harmful than scientists previously thought. Dozens of studies have made exactly the same finding since the beginning of the nuclear age. Some examples include:

- "Risk of cancer death after exposure to low-dose ionizing radiation underestimated, suggests nuclear industry study," *British Medical Journal*, Aug. 16, 2023.
- "Even low-level radioactivity is damaging, scientists conclude," *Science Daily*, Nov. 13, 2012.
- "With New Data, a Debate on Low-Level Radiation," *New York Times*, July 19, 2005.
- "Study: No Radiation Level Safe," AP, June 29, 2005.
- "Study: Even Low-Dose Radiation is Dangerous," Reuters, Oct. 9, 1997.
- "Radiation health effects understated, study shows," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, July 25, 1995.
- "Researcher discovers greater radiation risk," *Milwaukee Journal*, Dec. 9, 1992.
- "Radiation risks may be more than believed," *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1991.
- "Higher Cancer Risk Found in Low-Level Radiation," *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1989.

Scientists: Little known about wastes' effects

The U.S. National Association of Marine Laboratories released a statement in December 2022 saying it was not convinced by Japan's data. Marine biologist Robert Richmond, from the University of Hawaii, told the BBC on August 26: "We've seen an inadequate radiological, ecological impact assessment that makes us very concerned that Japan would not only be unable to detect what's getting into the water, sediment and organisms, but if it does, there is no recourse to



Hydrogen explosions blew apart four of the six reactor containment buildings at Fukushima-Daiichi in March 2011.

remove it ... there's no way to get the genie back in the bottle."

And biology professor Timothy Mousseau at the University of South Carolina, author of an exhaustive review of existing studies on tritium, told *The National Observer*, that tritium "has been insufficiently studied to be making hard promises about the long-term safety of this kind of release." Mousseau went on, "We don't actually really understand what the potential ramifications of a massive point source of tritium will be on the natural environment."

The Japanese government and Tepco hope that their global dispersal of meltdown cooling water will save the industry enough money that it can stay afloat amid the astronomical, ever-rising costs of post-Fukushima liability and disaster response. But August's launch of Japan's globalized pollution solution raises the chaos and deadliness of reactor operations to new heights, while the authorities claim that nothing needs to be done about nuclear reactor risks. —*JL*

Notes

[1] *New York Times*, "Japan to Release Treated Water from Ruined Nuclear Plant Despite Concerns," August 21, 2023.

[2] *Anchorage Daily News*, "U.S. must urge Japan not to release Fukushima wastewater into the sea," April 25, 2021.

Senate Extends Reactor Insurance Handout With No Public Scrutiny

On July 27, the U.S. Senate approved a 20-year extension of the Price-Anderson Act. The law provides that if there are disastrous consequences resulting from reactor accidents, the manufacturers, builders, and operators won't be held liable. The Act was first adopted in 1957 because no private insurer would issue an insurance policy to cover potentially huge costs. Later the government even took on responsibility for the industry's radioactive waste disposal or abandonment.

In Europe, the Organization of European Economic Cooperation and EUROATOM assumed public liability for reactor accidents there.

As Victor Gilinsky reports in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Price-Anderson was handed to industrial giants General Electric, Westinghouse, and others after they told Congress they would not build civil power reactors — machinery with which they had no experience — if they faced liability for catastrophic accidents.

The recent Senate action was done at night, without any pesky public hearings, and after being added to

the must-pass National Defense Authorization Act. The Act's extension is likely to pass in the majority Republican House of Representatives.

To promote nuclear power, "the government gave the builders and vendors freedom from liability for offsite accidents," Gilinsky wrote.

The act currently provides a mere \$13 billion for post-accident public compensation, with the funds coming over time from a self-insurance scheme funded by reactor owners.

This is because not even the richest insurance agencies in the world will sell a reactor accident liability policy to operators: the risks are too astronomical. The estimated cost of the 2011 Fukushima accident — \$300 billion dollars and counting — dwarfs the Price-Anderson "policy."

Any compensation costs beyond the \$13 billion "would land in the lap of Congress" Gilinsky notes, which is to say regular taxpayers — the same people who would be the health and environmental victims of a reactor disaster's radiation dispersal. —*JL*

Cancer Spike Near Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc. in Tenn.

First in-depth report near NFS facility finds dramatic rises in Unicoi County death rates

By the Radiation and Public Health Project

Since the 1990s, death rates for cancers and other causes in Unicoi County, Tennessee increased dramatically, according to a new report.

Prior to the late 1990s, Unicoi County death rates were about equal to the overall U.S. rate. But by the most recent period available (2019-2020), the county rate exceeded the national rate by the largest proportion in the past fifty years, specifically:

- 44% higher for all-cause mortality
- 61% higher for premature mortality (age 0-74)
- 39% higher for all-cancer mortality

The report says that the release of radioactive chemicals to the environment by the Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) facility may play a large role in the local health decline. The NFS complex is situated in Erwin, Tennessee in Unicoi County. "No other risk factor, such as access to health care, personal health practices, or poverty appears to have changed much," said report author Joseph Mangano of the Radiation and Public Health Project. Since its 1959 startup, it has generated enriched uranium fuels for naval and civil nuclear power reactors. NFS releases a portion of this uranium and other radioactive elements into local air and water. "NFS sits within the limits of Erwin, Tenn., next to homes, churches, and businesses. It has had numerous spills, releases, and violations," says Barbara O'Neal, co-founder of Erwin Citizens Awareness Network (ECAN), which commissioned the study.

Prior to the new report, the only national study of cancer near U.S. nuclear installations was conducted by the National Cancer Institute in 1990. That study did not include NFS.

The new report further identified a growing county-national gap in death rates for infants and children. In the most recent period analyzed, the death rate for children in Unicoi County exceeded the U.S. national rate by nearly 40%. ECAN co-founder Trudy Wallack told Joe Mangano of Radiation and Public Health: "as a resident of Greeneville, the protection and safety of the Nolichucky River stands paramount to my community and others. This river serves as the key source for our drinking water as well as family recreation and water sports. It is my hope that my contribution to this study will provide critical information regarding health...to all those who care and are asking questions."

The full report can be found on the Radiation and Public Health Project web site: www.radiation.org.