



Radiation and Public Health Project

Joseph J. Mangano, MPH, MBA, National Coordinator
912 Mill Grove Drive Norristown PA 19403
610-666-2985 odiejoe@aol.com
www.radiation.org

Directors
Robert Alvarez
Scott Cullen, JD
David Friedson
Jane S. Gould
Judith Johnsrud PhD
Joseph Mangano
William McDonnell
Ernest J. Sternglass, PhD

LOCAL CHILD HEALTH THREATENED BY SUSQUEHANNA NUCLEAR PLANT

For Immediate Release

Contact Joseph Mangano 610-666-2985

Berwick PA, November 15, 2006 – Current rates of infant deaths, childhood cancer, and thyroid cancer, all known to be affected by emissions from nuclear reactors, are elevated in Luzerne County, the site of the Susquehanna nuclear plant.

These findings, and other data on local disease rates, should be part of the federal decision on whether the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission should approve the application of PPL Susquehanna LLC to operate the plant until 2044 (the current license only allows operation until 2024). The information was presented at a federal hearing today in Berwick on the application.

“These high disease rates should shock all Luzerne County residents, and they should demand a thorough study of the health risks posed by the Susquehanna plant,” said Joseph Mangano MPH MBA of the Radiation and Public Health Project, who presented the data. “If radioactive emissions from the plant have been harmful, people should know this before the government decides whether or not to extend the plant's license.”

The 2000-2003 county rate of white infants who died in their first month was 23% above the U.S. rate, based on 55 deaths. In that same period, 43 Luzerne children under age 15 were diagnosed with cancer, a rate 38% above the nation. Data are taken from the National Center for Health Statistics and the Pennsylvania Cancer Registry.

Thyroid cancer statistics may be most alarming. In the late 1980s, as the two reactors at Susquehanna were starting, the Luzerne rate was 20% below the U.S. However, in 2000-2003, the Luzerne rate was 100% above – double – the nation. Radioactive iodine found only in nuclear weapons and reactors seeks out the thyroid gland, where it kills and impairs cells, leading to cancer.

Two large nuclear reactors have operated at Susquehanna beginning in 1982 and 1984, respectively. Virtually all of the 312,000 residents of Luzerne County live within 15 miles of the plant, and would be most likely to receive the greatest radiation exposures. Like all reactors, Susquehanna routinely emits gases and particles into the air and water, which enters human bodies by breathing and the food chain. There are over 100 radioactive chemicals in this mix; each causes cancer, and is especially harmful to fetuses, infants, and children.

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INFORMATION ON SUSQUEHANNA NUCLEAR PLANT AND LOCAL HEALTH

1. Susquehanna reactors 1/2 went critical (began producing radioactivity) on September 10, 1982 and May 8, 1984, respectively. Source: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. www.nrc.gov.

2. From January 1, 1999 to September 30, 2006, Susquehanna 1/2 operated 91.8% and 93.0% of the time, an all time high. Source: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, www.nrc.gov. Reactors operated 62345 and 63193 hours out of a maximum 67919.

3. From 2000-2003, 55 Luzerne county whites under 28 days old died out of 11601 live births, a rate of 4.74 per 1000. This rate was 23% greater than the U.S. rate of 3.84. Source: National Center for Health Statistics, <http://wonder.cdc.gov>, underlying cause of death.

4. From 2000-2003, 43 Luzerne county children under age fifteen were diagnosed with cancer. Based on an annual average population of 52,567, the cancer incidence rate was 20.45 per 100,000, which was 38% greater than the U.S. average of 14.78. Sources: PA Cancer Registry (www.state.pa.us) and U.S. Centers for Disease Control (<http://wonder.cdc.gov>, National Association of Cancer Registries – represents 39 states).

5. From 1985-1988 the Luzerne county thyroid cancer incidence rate was 3.54 per 100,000, based on 86 cases, or 20% below the U.S. rate of 4.40. From 2000-2003, the county rate was 16.41, based on 229 cases or 100% above the U.S. rate of 8.20. Sources: PA Cancer Registry (www.state.pa.us) and Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (www.seer.cancer.gov), representing 9 states and cities.