

July 11, 1979

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FROM: Robert Goldsmith, RHSB:SD  
Office of Standards Development

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Subject: RHSB INFORMATION REPORT #2: ROCKY FLATS  
NUCLEAR WEAPONS PLANT

cc: Central Files  
R. B. Minogue  
K. R. Goller  
R. A. Purple  
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UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

JUL 11 1979

NOTE TO: Distribution  
FROM: Robert Goldsmith, RHSB:SD  
THRU: Michael A. Parsont, Chief, RHSB:SD  
SUBJECT: RHSB INFORMATION REPORT #2: ROCKY FLATS NUCLEAR  
WEAPONS PLANT

A number of radiation health effects studies have been and are being undertaken in the vicinity of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant, Boulder, Colorado. This facility processes weapons grade plutonium. Several releases of plutonium from fires at the plant and by escape from a storage area have occurred over the past 10 years or so. These releases have led to the health effects studies on the population in the vicinity of the plant.

The April 13th issues of Science and the April 23rd issue of Newsweek reported results from a study by Dr. Carl Johnson, Chief of the Colorado Department of Public Health, on cancer incidence rates downwind from the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant. Science magazine reported that Dr. Johnson found elevated incidence rates in direct association with plutonium concentration measured in soil for cancers of the lung, nasal passages, larynx and leukemia. Not mentioned, however, was that the report was a preliminary one and had been submitted to Science for publication, and as yet, has not received a peer review. Newsweek reported the results of Dr. Johnson's study and also that a California-based anti-nuclear group released the report, but that Dr. Johnson "was not disturbed", by the premature release of his paper. It should be noted that Dr. Johnson submitted a draft copy of his report to the NRC, EPA, and NIH for comment. All three agencies found significant statistical, epidemiological and inferential errors in the report which might conceivably have affected his results. Dr. Johnson has agreed to consider the agencies' comments, and has submitted another draft for comment.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Goldsmith", written over a light-colored background.

Robert Goldsmith  
Radiological Health Standards Branch  
Office of Standards Development

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