



MEDIA RELEASE

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Agency to leave children unprotected and public in the dark on cancer risks around nuclear power facilities

Vital cancer study canceled as nuclear industry moves in to offer end-run cover-up

TAKOMA PARK, MD, September 8, 2015 — Beyond Nuclear, a leading U.S. NGO of record on the health, safety and environmental dangers of nuclear power facilities, today decried the outrageous decision by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to cancel a study that would have examined cancer incidence and mortalities and the connection to U.S. nuclear facilities.

“Study after study in Europe has shown a clear rise in childhood leukemia around operating nuclear power facilities, yet the NRC has decided to hide this vital information from the American public,” said Cindy Folkers, radiation and health specialist at Beyond Nuclear. The study, initiated in 2009 and carried out under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), had completed Phase 1 and was looking at seven pilot nuclear sites around the country, a project that was estimated to cost \$8 million.

“An \$8 million price tag for the next phase of this study is a drop in the bucket for an agency with a \$1 billion annual operating budget,” added Folkers. The NRC identified the “significant amount of time and resources needed and the agency’s current budget constraints” as its excuse for terminating the study.

Folkers noted that, in reality, nuclear industry manipulation, rather than budget constraints, could be behind the NRC’s sudden decision to abandon the NAS study.

[In documents](#) obtained by Beyond Nuclear it was revealed that NRC staff had been approached by the president of U.S. National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP), John Boice, offering a cheaper, faster and less sensitive study design to replace the NAS study, although the NRC has not yet agreed to accept the NCRP bid.

“NCRP is not only funded in part by the nuclear industry but its decision-makers also have strong pro-nuclear ties,” said Folkers, who has been leading a six-year effort by Beyond Nuclear and other groups to ensure the NAS cancer study went forward with scientific integrity.

“John Boice has repeatedly taken industry funding for health studies and has testified against plaintiffs in radiation exposure cases,” Folkers continued. “The public will have absolutely no confidence in any conclusions reached by such a study and would recognize it as an attempt by the NRC to, yet again, bury public concerns about radiation exposure,” Folkers added.

What’s also behind the cancelation, Folkers alleges, is the incontrovertible evidence of negative health impacts caused by the routine operation of nuclear power reactors and especially on children, that such a study would have made public.

Last year, Alfred Koerblein and Ian Fairlie, a noted British radiation biologist, conducted a meta-analysis of cancer studies around nuclear plants in the UK, Germany, France and Switzerland and found “a highly statistically significant 37% increase in childhood leukemias within 5 km (3 miles) of almost all nuclear power plants” in those countries.

Reacting to the NRC’s decision, Fairlie said it was “highly regrettable and inexplicable given the large amount of good evidence from countries outside the U.S. which strongly pointed to increased leukemias near nuclear power plants.”

The influence of the nuclear industry over the NRC is no surprise, given the agency receives 90% of its funding from the nuclear industry itself. But a recent pattern of dismissing public engagement and canceling minimal safety measures at U.S. nuclear plants is a worrying trend.

“Funding a cancer study around nuclear power plants is a legitimate cost of doing radioactive business that the NRC could have collected through its licensing fees,” said Paul Gunter, Director of Reactor Oversight at Beyond Nuclear and an NRC watchdog. “Instead, the NRC has decided to pass along another cost savings to the nuclear industry at the expense of public health and safety.”

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Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic. The Beyond Nuclear team works with diverse partners and allies to provide the public, government officials, and the media with the critical information necessary to move humanity toward a world beyond nuclear. Beyond Nuclear: 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 400, Takoma Park, MD 20912. Info@beyondnuclear.org. www.beyondnuclear.org.