



Radiation and Public Health Project

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Embargoed until 11:30 a.m., EST, November 16, 2009

EPIDEMIC OF THYROID CANCER CASES FOUND NEAR INDIAN POINT NUCLEAR POWER PLANT – NEW JOURNAL ARTICLE

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New York – The rate of thyroid cancer cases in counties closest to the Indian Point nuclear plant 35 miles north of midtown Manhattan are the highest in New York State, and among the highest in the U.S., according to a scientific journal article released today.

The 2001-2005 thyroid cancer rate for the four counties flanking Indian Point – Orange, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester – was 66% above the U.S., according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Local rates were not elevated in the late 1970s, as the two Indian Point reactors began operating, but have sharply increased since.

“High thyroid cancer rates near Indian Point represents an epidemic, and is a significant public health concern,” says Joseph Mangano MPH MBA. “The only major known cause of the disease is exposure to radioactive iodine, which is emitted into the air by nuclear plants.” Mangano, Executive Director of the Radiation and Public Health Project research group, published the article in the *International Journal of Health Services*.

“The Indian Point area is constantly being bombarded with routine and accidental releases of radiation,” says Susan Shapiro JD. “This new report proves our worst fears that the area surrounding Indian Point is toxic and causing thyroid cancer in large numbers.” Shapiro is a Board member of the environmental advocacy group Hudson River Sloop Clearwater.

For the first time, the CDC has made county-specific cancer incidence data for most U.S. states (obtained from state registries) available on the Internet. The current article used cases diagnosed 2001-2005 from counties in 42 states plus the District of Columbia.

There are 500 counties in these states with a population of at least 88,000. Of these counties, 2001-2005 thyroid cancer incidence rates in several adjacent to Indian Point are among the highest in the country:

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| <u>County</u> | <u>% Rate vs. U.S.</u> | <u>Rank of 500 U.S. Counties</u> |
|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Rockland | +106% | 4 |
| Putnam | +102% | 5 |
| Orange | + 87% | 8 |
| Westchester | + 42% | -- |

Local rates of thyroid cancer were well above the nation for all races, sexes, and age groups. A total of 1,276 cases in the four counties were diagnosed in the period. Rockland, Putnam, and Orange counties have the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd highest rates in the state.

Radioactive iodine is one of many chemicals produced only in nuclear weapons and reactors. It is routinely and accidentally released into local air by reactors such as Indian Point, and enters human bodies through breathing and the food chain. Radioactive iodine seeks out the thyroid gland, and destroys and injures cells, which can lead to cancer.

Numerous scientific articles have shown a link between iodine and thyroid cancer. Local rates of childhood thyroid cancer skyrocketed after the Chernobyl meltdown in 1986. The U.S. National Cancer Institute found as many as 212,000 Americans developed thyroid cancer from above-ground atomic bomb tests in Nevada.

The article released today showed the highest rates of thyroid cancer in the U.S. occurred in a 90-mile radius of eastern Pennsylvania, central New Jersey, and southern New York. In this area, there are 16 nuclear reactors at 7 plants, the highest concentration in the U.S.

The U.S. thyroid cancer rate has nearly tripled since 1980, the sharpest rise of any cancer (along with liver). Over 37,000 Americans are diagnosed with the disease each year.

The 40-year licenses for the two Indian Point reactors will soon expire. Entergy Nuclear of Jackson MS has requested that federal regulators grant a 20 year license extension, but numerous parties, including New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, are opposing this extension. Without an extension, Indian Point would close within six years.