



Radiation and Public Health Project

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CANCER DEATH RATES NEAR SALEM (NJ) NUCLEAR PLANT RISING SINCE 1980s – NEW REPORT

*Plant just 30 miles from Philadelphia, 18 miles from Wilmington
Public Officials Urged to Follow Up, Learn Causes*

Since the mid-1980s, the cancer death rate in Salem County NJ has steadily risen, from 5.3% below the state rate to 20.2% above, according to a new report.

The study found that while county rates were just below state rates for decades, the county consistently exceeded the state soon after startup of three nuclear power reactors at the Salem-Hope Creek nuclear plant - in 1976, 1980, and 1986 – and is still peaking.

“While many factors can account for increased cancer death rates, the rise in Salem County is likely influenced by relatively recent causes,” says study author Joseph Mangano, MPH MBA. “Health officials should take this data seriously and attempt to find reasons for this unusual trend, including radiation emitted from Salem-Hope Creek.”

The report uses U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, in four-year periods starting in 1968. For two decades, the county age-adjusted death rate for all cancers combined was slightly below other New Jersey counties, reaching a low of -5.3% in 1983-1986. Since then the county rate has steadily risen, peaking at +20.2% in 2011-2014. The county rate now exceeds the state for all ages, races, and major cancer types.

In the same period, the county death rate for all causes other than cancer also soared, from +2.4% to +23.3%. If the county/state ratio had remained the same after 1986, a total of 2851 fewer deaths would have occurred in Salem in the next 28 years, 814 from cancer.

"This study suggests that something very bad is happening in this area," said Janet Tauro, NJ board chair of Clean Water Action, and founding member of GRAMMES (Grandmothers, Mothers, and More for Energy Safety.) "It is beyond time for federal, state, and county health officials to look into this and do a thorough, well-controlled, and well-financed study that takes into consideration exposures to chemical pollution in combination with continuous exposure to low level radiation of the type emitted by nuclear plants. Is the public receiving a power punch? Do an in-depth study and find out."

The plant is located on the Delaware Bay, 30 miles southwest of Philadelphia and 18 miles south of Wilmington, making a meltdown catastrophic to the area. The plant has among the highest emission levels of over 100 cancer-causing chemicals, only found in

nuclear weapon explosions and reactor releases. Over 216 million curies of radioactive waste are stored at the plant, more than released during the 1986 Chernobyl meltdown.

Norm Cohen, coordinator of the Unplug Salem Campaign, which was founded as a special project of the Coalition for Peace and Justice, commented the good work done by Mangano has helped. “We have been fighting for the closure of the three nuclear reactors. We won't feel safe until these ancient nukes are shut down,” Cohen said.

Mangano is Executive Director of the Radiation and Public Health Project (RPHP) research and education group based in New York. He is author or co-author of 34 medical journal articles and 3 books on health hazards of emissions from nuclear reactors.

The study can be found on the RPHP web site at <http://radiation.org/cancer-rate-rising-near-salem-nj-nuke-plant/>.