



Radiation and Public Health Project

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PRESS RELEASE

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CANCER RATE IN GRUNDY COUNTY, SITE OF DRESDEN NUKE PLANT, AMONG HIGHEST IN ILLINOIS, WORST FOR RADIATION-SENSITIVE CANCERS

The current [****2014-2018**] cancer incidence rate in Grundy County, the site of the Dresden nuclear plant, is **22%**** above the state rate, the **9th highest**** of all 102 Illinois counties, and one of the highest in the United States, according to a new report** released today.

Rates of cancers most sensitive to radiation are especially high, including child cancer (+18%), thyroid cancer (+43%), breast cancer (+24%), and leukemia (+33%). Rates are taken from the National Cancer Institute analysis of 2014-2018** county-specific data.

“I am not aware of any county with a nuclear plant where radiation-sensitive cancer rates are so consistently high,” comments Joseph Mangano, Executive Director of the Radiation and Public Health Project (RPHHP) and author of the report. Mangano, author or co-author of 38 medical journal articles, has been with RPHHP since 1989.

“The Dresden nuclear plant may well be harming local residents,” states Christie Brinkley, the model/actress who is a Board member of RPHHP. “It is old, its parts are deteriorating, and continues to emit more and more dangerous radiation the longer it operates,” she adds.

Dresden reactors 2 and 3, 43 miles from Chicago, have operated for over 50 years; they are among the eight oldest reactors in the U.S. Exelon Nuclear, which owns Dresden, intended to shut the plant in November, due to its unprofitability. It recently received a large bailout from the Illinois legislature which will enable it to operate through 2026.

In the original Report analysis done for 2013-2017, a total of 1,508 residents of Grundy County were diagnosed with cancer – the highest reported rate of any Illinois county for those years. The county cancer incidence rate is **36th highest** of all 3,100 U.S. counties, and **8th highest** among the 1,600 counties with a population of at least 27,000.

The report also shows that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the two Dresden reactors started operating, the cancer death rates in Grundy County was 13% below the U.S. rate. In the most recent decade, the county rate was 15% above the U.S.

“Health statistics like these beg for a more complete and formal investigation on the part of the Illinois Department of Public Health into the causes of these unusually high rates,” notes David

Kraft, director of the Chicago-based Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS), a nuclear watchdog organization and nuclear power critic.

The organizations are today sending a letter plus these study results to the Illinois Dept. of Public Health and Governor J.B. Pritzker, urging they take official action to examine the causes for the high cancer rates, and determine what role if any the recently subsidized Dresden reactors play in this.

RPHP is planning to follow up this cancer report by asking local residents to donate baby teeth from their children. RPHP will test these teeth for levels of Strontium-90, a radioactive chemical found only in nuclear weapons explosions and nuclear reactor operations. RPHP's "Tooth Fairy Project," which so far has tested 5,000 teeth, is the only study of radiation in bodies of Americans living near reactors.

While factors other than exposure to Dresden emissions may affect cancer rates, none are apparent. Grundy has a low percent of non-whites, persons without health insurance, poverty, foreign born, and non-English speakers.

"The principle known as Occam's Razor strongly suggests a role played by the Dresden Station in contributing alone or in synergy with other possible sources to a major health hazard requiring more in-depth investigation on the part of the State," Kraft asserts.

Some evidence suggests a direct connection between radioactive releases and high cancer rates. For example, the only known cause of thyroid cancer is exposure to ionizing radiation, in particular radioactive iodine, which is released by reactors like Dresden.

In addition, children are most susceptible to the toxic emissions from reactors. Medical journal articles published by RPHP show that within two years after nuclear plants shut, dramatic declines in local deaths among infants and cancers diagnosed in young children occur.

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RPHP is a New York-based non-profit research and education organization, that whose mission is to understand health hazards from exposures to nuclear reactor emissions and nuclear weapons tests. www.radiation.org.

Nuclear Energy Information Service(NEIS) is a Chicago-based safe-energy, anti-nuclear power watchdog environmental organization promoting renewables and efficiency alternatives to nuclear power. www.neis.org.

*[**ADDENDUM: In the past day we have learned that the National Cancer Institute – the source of the data used in the study – has released a new set of data for the years 2014-2018. The data analysed in the Study used data for the years 2013-2017 -- what was then the most current data available. The Study is being adjusted to incorporate the new data; while the data in this release already reflects the 2014-2018. This has in some cases resulted in percentages dropping compared to those generated by the 2013-2017 data. However, this neither accounts for why the rates were so high for 2013-2017; nor explains the cause(s) for the drops reported in the 2014-2018 data. Thus, the request for more thorough examination of the causes lodged with the IDPH and Governor's Office remain valid.]*