



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

Media release - for immediate release, 20th October 2009

Is the Irish coastline truly 'safe' from radiation? NFLA urge more independent research

Independent research given to the recent Nuclear Free Local Authorities All Ireland Forum meeting suggests some major weaknesses in the official studies on the extent of radiation discharges on the Irish coastline.

The seminar (1) heard from the former World Wildlife Fund and independent marine pollution consultant, Tim Deere-Jones, that the recent study published by the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) (2) had some significant gaps within it and he urged that a wider study needed to be urgently commissioned.

The RPII report published in the summer, 'Assessment of aquatic radiation pathways in Ireland' argued that radioactive discharge limits on the coastline of Ireland were now at much lower and 'safe' levels and there were no significant issues now in regards to human health or seafood.

Tim Deere-Jones questioned why the RPII had commissioned the UK government's agency CEFAS to conduct the result at a time when the UK is moving towards a policy of nuclear new build. In his critique of the RPII report, Deere-Jones argued that the report had:

- No assessment of sea to land transfer over exposed coasts;
- No assessment of impact of sea to land transfer on terrestrial (coastal zone) produce diet pathways;
- No assessment of impact on inhalation pathways;
- No assessment of impact of sea to land transfer on house dust (coastal dwellings) and associated pathways.

The report also does not cover concerns over the increased existence on Irish Sea coasts of the radioactive element Americium 247, which is a decayed by-product of plutonium. Deere-Jones argued that it can break up in the sea and go much further inland than the RPII study suggests. Sea to land transfer of radioactive materials can take place through the likes of flooding, algal blooms, flotsam, sea spray and aerosols.

Tim Deere-Jones said:

"The RPII report suggesting Irish coastal communities do not have to worry about radioactive discharges from Sellafield alarms me greatly. Independent studies around the Irish Sea prove that radioactive particles can transfer across the coastline, penetrate at least 10 km inland, contaminate the agricultural and horticultural food chain and give rise to significant doses to coastal zone communities distant from sources of radioactive discharges. I urge the RPII to widen its research to reassure the coastal communities of Ireland that their health is not being seriously affected by 50 years of the UK nuclear industry."

NFLA Ireland Joint Chair, Councillor Mark Dearey (Louth County Council) added:

"As a councillor in an area which for decades has had worrying childhood and adult cancer rates which may derive from the Sellafield discharge programme the RPII report had initially reassured me. This critique from Tim Deere-Jones deeply troubles me and the NFLA will be writing to the RPII and the Irish Governments – north and south – to urge independent research is undertaken now. Our people's health comes first."

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Ends

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A full written report of Tim Deere-Jones presentation will be available shortly.

Sources:

- (1) NFLA Ireland seminar, Bray Town Hall, 16th October 2009.
- (2) RPII - Assessment of aquatic radiation pathways in Ireland 2008, published June 2009.

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