

# BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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### Study finds recent radioactive fallout downwind of SRS

#### Over 50 times background level

Today at a press conference in Augusta, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and The RadioActivist Campaign reported that high levels of radioactive contamination have escaped from the US Department of Energy's Savannah River Site in South Carolina. They cited evidence which indicates that radioactive pollution is over 50 times background levels downwind and over 1,000 times background levels downstream of the old atomic weapons facilities.

Norm Buske, Director of The RadioActivist Campaign and author of the report, *Under A Cloud: Fallout from the Savannah River Site*, said the high levels of radioactivity which he found would have resulted from a recent accident at SRS. According to Buske, the pattern of radioactive cesium-137, strontium-90 and cobalt-60 indicates irradiated nuclear fuel as the source of the contamination.

The *Under A Cloud* study concentrated on radioactive cesium-137, a nuclear fission by-product. Findings include samples of pine needles gathered northeast of SRS with levels 70 picoCuries per kilogram (pCi/kg) and squirrel tails with 174 pCi/kg. Normal background radiation of cesium-137 is about 1 pCi/kg. Vegetation in Lower Three Runs Creek had 1254 pCi/kg; the EPA limit for drinking water is 200 pCi/kg.

Charles Utley, community organizer for BREDL, expressing concern for his neighbors said, "People fish the Savannah River. These radioactive poisons would work their way to the river where people work and live. We should be told what's going on."

Louis Zeller, who coordinates BREDL's six year old SRS campaign, said, "The wind carries radioactive cesium in all directions. These results show that contamination from SRS is a threat to public health in the entire Central Savannah River area."

TRAC and BREDL released a new video, entitled *Under A Cloud*, which features local activists Utley and Arthur Smith, a former SRS worker. The video will spearhead BREDL's educational campaign to force a cleanup of existing contamination and stop new pollution sources at SRS.

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is a southern regional grassroots environmental organization founded in 1984. BREDL has offices in North Carolina and Georgia.

The RadioActivist Campaign, or TRAC, is based in Belfair, Washington. TRAC measures and publicizes radioactivity around nuclear facilities to promote public safety and site accountability. Norm Buske is a physicist and has measured radioactivity around American and Russian nuclear facilities since 1983. Background information about TRAC is posted at: [www.radioactivist.org](http://www.radioactivist.org).

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