



# Groups' findings disputed by SRS

## Organizations claiming Site had an unreported radioactive release

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Two environmental groups reported Tuesday that they have evidence that the Savannah River Site had an unreported release of radioactive cesium-137 between April 2002 and April 2003.

Members of the Blue

Ridge Environmental Defense League and The RadioActivist Campaign charge that they collected samples showing radioactive pollution more than 50 times greater than background levels downwind of the nuclear reservation and more than 1,000 times background levels downstream.

"The wind carries

radioactive cesium in all directions," said Louis Zeller of the BREDL. "These results show that contamination from SRS is a threat to public health in the entire Central Savannah River area."

While the environmental groups hold their data points to troubles at SRS, a spokesman for Westing-

house Savannah River Company said, "This is an absurd report."

WSRC spokesman Will Callicott said, "The conclusions are totally out of step with what's been published and peer reviewed in the scientific literature, particularly the literature pertaining to cesium and its background presence in the

world environment."

Background levels of cesium-137 remain in the environment from Cold War-era testing of nuclear weapons.

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 he found were the result of a recent accident at SRS.

Buske said the pattern of radioactive cesium-137, strontium-90 and cobalt-60 collected in his six samples indicates irradiated nuclear fuel as the source of the contamination.

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SRS officials refute Buske's charges.

"Particularly troubling is the hint, based on a minimal amount of data, that there's been some sort of recent, unreported SRS accident with significant offsite consequences. There hasn't been," Callicott said.

"No one else has observed a pattern to suggest this is true."

Callicott added, "This report appears to have reached a conclusion based on six samples. SRS takes thousands of samples per year, and has publicly documented and shared its monitoring results for more than

50 years. Independent studies have confirmed that those results are valid. That documentation has included the measuring of cesium in and around the site's property. Cesium is present at levels far below drinking water standards, or any other health and safety based standards."

While SRS claims it is operating within regulatory standards, the BREDL said samples it collected showed vegetation in the Lower Three Runs Creek area, which runs into the Savannah River, had six times the cesium-137 content allowed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"People fish the Savannah River," said Charles Utley, a

community organizer for BRDEL.

"These radioactive poisons would work their way to the river where people work and live. We should be told what's going on."

A recently released environmental monitoring document prepared by WSRC for 2002 showed no major environmental releases.

The WSRC document states that the largest radiation dose a single offsite individual could have received from SRS operations in 2002 was estimated to be .18 millirem, which is .18 percent of the U.S. Department of Energy standard.

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