



Bellefonte Efficiency & Sustainability Team

B.E.S.T.

A local chapter of Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League



PRESS RELEASE

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REPORT REVEALS 21% HIGHER DEATH RATES NEAR BROWNS FERRY NUCLEAR PLANT

Spotlight on Madison, Morgan, Marshall, Lawrence, Limestone, DeKalb and Jackson Counties.

The results of a detailed investigation released today reveal residents living near or downwind of Browns Ferry are at greater risk for cancer and death than average U.S. communities. The study found potential links between radioactive emissions from Browns Ferry and adverse health effects in seven counties near and downwind of the plant.

Findings in the report:

- Infant mortality in the seven proximate/downwind counties is 21.6% above the U.S. rate, a steady increase from the early 1990s, when it was below the U.S. rate. The excess is 40.3% for Hispanics and 32.6% for whites.
- Before operations began at Browns Ferry in the 1970s, the local death rate was 1.7% above the U.S., but the gap has steadily risen to a 2010 rate of 20.5% vs. the U.S.
- Local death rates in the seven counties are especially high for young persons. The rate for young people who died at age 0-24 was 27.4% and adults at age 25-44 was 25.7% higher than U.S. rates.
- Of the 10 Alabama counties with the highest incidences of thyroid cancer, four (4) are among the seven proximate/downwind counties. Radioactive iodine produced by nuclear power (or bombs) is the only known cause of thyroid cancer.
- Local citizen group, BEST, has monitored and recorded radiation levels from double to 40 times greater than background levels downwind and downriver from Browns Ferry, with only near-background readings upwind and upriver; however, the group says it needs a spectrograph to identify specific radionuclides and discern source(s).

“We find it hard to believe the mantra from the nuclear industry that there is no need to worry about radiation exposure, even though numerous studies tell a different story,” says BEST project manager Garry Morgan. “We couldn’t get any real-time information about radiation emissions from TVA,” he added, “so we decided to take our own measurements.”

The group established 50 monitoring sites around Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant. Background levels of radiation were first determined, then counts per minute of alpha, beta, gamma, and X-ray radiation were recorded in the air, water, and land using protocols from the EPA and Department of Homeland Security. The highest levels of radiation were detected in Scottsboro, 70 miles downwind of the Browns Ferry site.

BEST/MATRR commissioned epidemiologist Joseph Mangano, MPH, MBA, Director Radiation & Public Health Project, to do a preliminary report. Mangano analyzed national and local records, compiling data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute, as well as NRC and TVA records. He also made a preliminary analysis of the data collected by the citizen team for the report.

“The measurements from the collection sites taken by the BEST radiation monitoring team, coupled with data before and during Browns Ferry Nuclear reactor operations, show a troubling pattern of increased morbidity, mortality, and incidences of cancer for those living downwind from Browns Ferry, especially for infants,” said Mangano.

As of 2010, Browns Ferry maintains 1.932 metric tons of radioactive waste on site, the 2nd largest of 71 U.S. nuclear plants; and the amount of radioactivity (over 314 million curies), the 5th highest in the U.S., is equivalent to several times that released by the 1986 Chernobyl meltdown, and hundreds of times more than releases from the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Bellefonte Efficiency & Sustainability Team / Mothers Against Tennessee River Radiation (BEST/MATRR) is a local chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League. The full report may be downloaded at www.MATRR.org.