

Greenpeace Canada
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Greenpeace releases health study of 1986 nuclear accident...Chernobyl death toll enormously underestimated

A new Greenpeace report, with input from 52 scientists from around the world, reveals that official estimates of the health impact from the Chernobyl catastrophe have been hugely under-estimated by the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Chernobyl Catastrophe: Consequences on Human Health, is published on the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl meltdown, which occurred on April 26, 1986. The report predicts that 270,000 cancers will be caused by Chernobyl fallout, and of these, 93,000 will be fatal. The report also notes that there have been 60,000 additional deaths in Russia in the last 15 years due to the Chernobyl accident. The total toll for Ukraine and Belarus is estimated at another 140,000. The report challenges the IAEA's September 2005 Chernobyl Forum Report, which predicted 4,000 additional deaths.

"The nuclear industry in Canada and abroad has a vested interest in whitewashing the impacts of the Chernobyl accident" said Shawn-Patrick Stensil, Greenpeace Energy Campaigner. "Denial of the Chernobyl disaster is an insult to its victims. The International Atomic Energy Agency cannot claim to be a legitimate nuclear watchdog if it cannot honestly acknowledge the real health impacts of nuclear power."

Greenpeace notes that the IAEA hid the true scale of the Chernobyl disaster by basing its prediction of 4,000 fatal cancers on a relatively small group of 600,000 people, including the 'liquidators' (people sent in to 'clean up' after the accident) and those relocated after the accident. In fact, at least 2 billion people were exposed to radioactive fallout from the accident. The IAEA report also excluded non-cancer impacts and dismissed many illnesses as 'radiophobia'.

In addition to direct radiation health impacts, the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia were also seriously affected by a resulting economic crisis, loss of agricultural land, and the forced relocation of some 300,000 people. The Greenpeace report also addresses the ongoing health impacts from Chernobyl, including damage to immune and endocrine systems leading to accelerated ageing, cardiovascular and blood illnesses, chromosomal aberrations and an increase of deformities in fetuses and children.

"This is not just a debate about future cancer statistics. The human cost of the Chernobyl disaster is far too high" said Greenpeace Energy Coordinator Dave Martin, "Nuclear power is just as dangerous for Canada in 2006 as it was for Ukraine in 1986. A catastrophic accident has a low probability, but devastating consequences. Canada should phase out nuclear power -- conservation and renewable energy are safer, cleaner, and

cheaper."

Chernobyl Forum Report, by the International Atomic Energy Agency is available at:
http://www.who.int/ionizing_radiation/chernobyl/who_chernobyl_report_2006.pdf