

Hanford top health risk, survey finds

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By Lonnie Rosenwald
Staff writer

RICHLAND — The Hanford Nuclear Reservation and other nuclear activities are a "major source of health concern" among Eastern Washington residents, according to a new poll.

One-fifth of those questioned in the poll said nuclear matters represent the single greatest risk to them and their families. Nearly half called Hanford a "significant" health risk.

The poll was conducted by Market Trends Research of Bellevue and Hall and Associates of Seattle for the state Nuclear Waste Board. The firms interviewed 600 residents of Spokane, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla and Yakima counties by telephone in late August and early September.

Fear about Hanford "tends to be centered in the counties of Walla Walla and Spokane, with women and young adults," pollster Bill Young told a panel of nuclear and health experts in Richland.

Overall, 49 percent of the poll respondents disagreed and 47 percent agreed with the statement: "Nuclear operations at Hanford create a significant health risk for you and your family."

Fifty-seven percent of Spokane residents agreed while 40 percent disagreed. Seventeen percent of residents of Benton County, where Hanford is located, agreed, while 74 percent disagreed.

Ten percent of people cited either Hanford or nuclear waste as a concern.

It ranked second, behind air pollution, among people when they were asked to name the single greatest health risk.

Other results of the survey:

■ Fifty-seven percent ranked overall nuclear risks high or very high, compared to 27 percent who called them low or very low.

■ People said industrial chemicals and cigarette smoke were higher risks than nuclear operations, but water and auto pollution and pesticides were lower risks.

■ People said they were worried about leaks, accidents and the possibility of opening a nuclear waste dump at Hanford.

B2 TRI-CITY HERALD THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1986

Convicts used to test the effects of alcohol

By The Associated Press

WALLA WALLA — Washington State Penitentiary inmates in the 1960s were used to test the effects of alcohol on human organs as well as to measure the effects of radiation, a former warden said Wednesday.

Bobby Rhay, warden from 1957 to 1977 who earlier this week discussed radiation experiments, says inmates also volunteered for tests conducted to determine alcohol's effect on the liver and kidneys.

"They had a quota of alcohol to drink each day and then biopsies would be taken at regular intervals to show the results," Rhay said.

Rhay said the alcohol experiments were conducted at the prison, where inmates were given "100-and-some-proof" alcohol.

"When I first became superintendent, the idea was that when a person was convicted and sent to prison, he lost his civil rights."

W.L. "Kip" Kautzky, director of the state Department of Correction's Division of Prisons, said prison medical experiments were

not unusual in the nation's correctional facilities during the 1960s.

"The prison population was generally viewed as expendable or available for this type of experimentation, particularly with drugs," Kautzky said.

Documents released by the U.S. Department of Energy earlier this week revealed the use of Washington and Oregon inmates for studies of X-rays on testicles.

The documents were released at the request of Centers for Disease Control scientists who have convened a special study panel at Richland on the health effects of 40 years of operations at Hanford.

The inmates were given doses of radiation to their testicles and agreed beforehand to undergo vasectomies later in order to prevent conception of damaged children.

He said some inmates changed their minds and did not undergo vasectomies. Kautzky said experiments resulting in a "negative physical or mental impact" have not been conducted on prisoners at the penitentiary since 1981.

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