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# Panel praised for report on radiation at Hanford

## No money yet to pursue studies

by Elouise Schumacher  
Times staff reporter

RICHLAND — In the hotel's spacious ballroom, Hanford manager Mike Lawrence addressed the large local chapter of the American Nuclear Society, many of whose members are employed at the Department of Energy reservation north of town.

Directly across the hall, crowded around tables, were 13 experts trying to figure out, in five days, what studies would be necessary to determine the effect more than 40 years of nuclear activities have had on workers, their families and downwind residents.

At the beginning of last week, it seemed like an impossible task for the panel, put together by the Centers for Disease Control at the request of Washington, Oregon and the DOE.

The 13 nationally recognized scientists, most with only cursory knowledge of Hanford operations, were asked to hear public testimony, go over 19,000 pages of recently declassified documents about the nuclear site, and come up with recommendations for additional research for the states of Washington and Oregon and Indian tribes.

"I thought it would be impossible for the panel to reach consensus because of the large number of issues being raised," said Dr. Jim Ruttenber, cancer epidemiologist with the CDC in Atlanta and panel organizer. "I'm quite surprised and pleased with their report. They made some very significant recommendations."

Top priority in the seven pages of preliminary recommendations is a study of the massive releases of

radioactive iodine in the 1940s and early 1950s. "The entire panel felt that (the size of iodine emission) was extraordinarily unusual," said panel chairman Dr. Glyn Caldwell, of the Arizona Department of Health Services. "That's why we pushed for a study in that area."

More than 500,000 curies of radioactive iodine were released in the early years of Hanford operations, the panel learned. Only 15 curies were emitted during the nation's worst commercial reactor accident at Three Mile Island.

Radioactive iodine concentrates in the thyroid, especially in

that the department continue to release health-research data so that outside, independent assessments can be made — something the DOE has refused or been reluctant to do.

Despite the panel's efforts and report, there is no guarantee of money for any of the studies, expected to cost from \$200,000 to more than \$1 million. The DOE says the state has to share the costs; state officials say there is no money and that the state should not have to pay because the releases were from a federal site.

The 570-square-mile complex was built in the 1940s to produce fuel for nuclear weapons, and today is the nation's largest dump site for military waste. Hanford also is a finalist to permanently store highly radioactive waste from all U.S. commercial reactors.

"The problem has arisen as a result of DOE activities," said Roy Filby, a member of the state's Nuclear Waste Board and chairman of a regional committee that will try to carry out the panel's recommendations. "It makes sense for the state to ask DOE for money ... now that 13 experts from all over the nation told us some of the things we need to do."

After the CDC compiles the panel's final report, the Hanford Historical Documents Review Committee will take a look at it. The group will meet Oct. 30 in Portland to determine what steps to take next.

"It will be difficult (for DOE) to look at the recommendations and say we do nothing," said Filby.

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**Roy Filby  
of Nuclear Waste Board**

infants and children, and can cause cancer.

Ruttenber also called important the panel's demand for information to determine the doses people received from planned and unexpected radioactive releases.

The DOE has not done any dose assessments — or health studies — for off-site populations and claims that its own studies show that Hanford employees have suffered no ill health from their work.

But a majority of the panel said that the DOE has no "sound scientific basis" for that claim. The panel further recommended

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